





HELP SUPPORT Community Sardens



From garden to table, community gardens build healthy people and healthy communities.

As part of our ongoing commitment to community gardens, DeLoach Vineyards will award a total of \$20,000 to 5 community gardens in the 2nd annual DeLoach Community Gardens Award program.

HELP SELECT THE WINNERS:

- Visit www.deloachcommunitygardens.com to view videos from nominated gardens
- Vote for the garden you feel will benefit most from winning an award
- Share the contest with your friends and encourage them to vote
- Vote once daily between March 6 and August 6, 2012
- The Top 5 Winners who receive the most votes will be awarded the prize and will be announced in the December 2012/January 2013 issue of Organic Gardening



 Scan this QR code to view videos from the nominated gardens and vote for your favorite.

Vote today to help us make a positive impact on communities in need – when access to fresh food is the prize, everyone is a winner!

Void where prohibited. Contest begins 12:00 AM March 6, 2012 and ends at 11:59 PM August 6, 2012. No purchase necessary to enter or win. A purchase will not improve your chances of winning. Open only to legal residents of 49 United States and DC (excluding Arizona and residents of Guam, Puerto Rico, and all other US territories and possessions) who are 21 years of age or older. Rodale, Inc., 400 South Tenth Street, Emmaus, PA 18098-0099 is the operator of this sweepstakes. For a complete list of rules, please visit www.OrganicGardening.com/DeLoachaward.

Join DeLoach in Supporting Community Gardens

DeLoach Vineyards is honored to sponsor the Second Annual Community Gardens Award program. We would like to thank all of the community gardens who submitted their applications to participate in this year's program. It was difficult for our team at DeLoach Vineyards to only select fifteen gardens from such inspiring stories.

www.deloachcommunitygardens.com

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From our vineyards to your table, taste the very essence of the Russian River Valley.

ESTATE VINEYARDS









Happy 70th Anniversary Organic Gardening!

Dear Organic Gardening Readers:

l've been reading *Organic Gardening* and other Rodale books since 1965 when I was 21 traveling through New Hampshire, looking to find my place in the world and a way to make it better and healthier. I was raised on my parents' 80-acre organic berry farm on pristine Vancouver Island. My dad was a confirmed mulcher, making what he called "an earthworm paradise." His advice to me as a young boy was, "Always leave the soil better than you found it." That philosophy underpinned my life thereafter and continues to guide our independent family company, Nature's Path Organic Foods.

Organic Gardening Magazine is, and always has been a great inspiration for me, giving lots of valuable gardening tips, as well as sourcing seeds, tools, recipes, growing methods, natural insect control, companion-planting, and great articles on a wide variety of subjects. It's wonderful to see OG available in local supermarkets, coops and natural food stores, reaching a huge readership, inspiring millions of North Americans to grow their own, fresh, incomparably tasty veggies, berries and fruits.

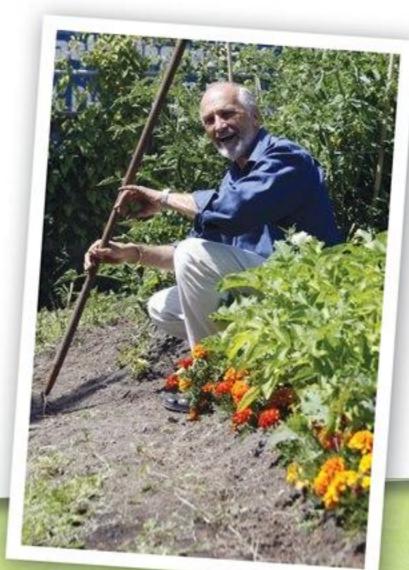
Happy Gardening, the Organic way!

Arran Stephens

Founder, Co-CEO

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Always Leave the Earth Better Than You Found It.

~ Rupert Stephens



The words of Rupert Stephens, our founder Arran Stephens' father, flavor all we do here at Nature's Path. In fact, for 3 generations we've built our company on them. Caring for people while caring for the planet. And all the while, making food we're proud of.









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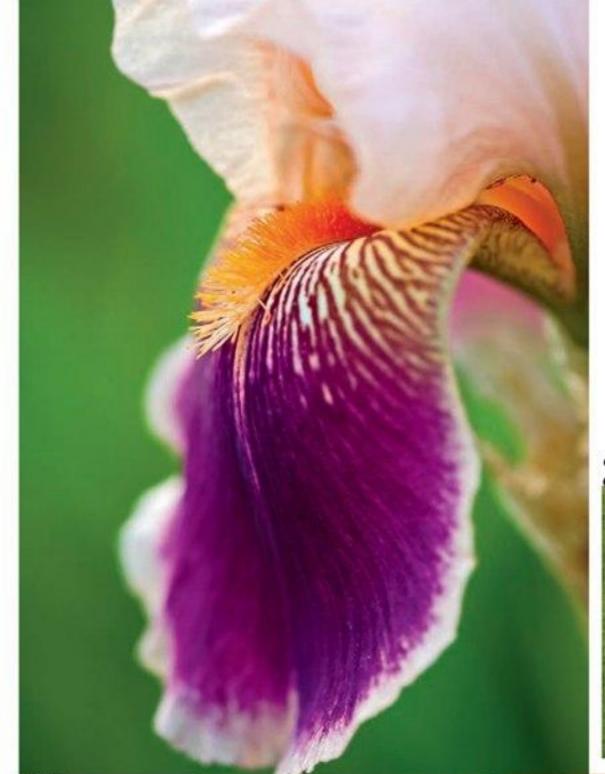
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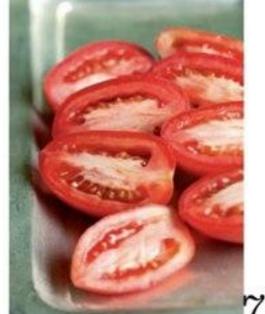


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22



"They move through like an army. They just eat every plant in sight."



Small world.



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ifting through our memories to create this celebratory issue turned up some surprises for me, not least of which is the fact that Annie Proulx was once an OG editor. Also, the English garden writer Joy Larkcom, whose books and articles were an inspiration when I was hoeing a row in a London allotment, had been influenced early on by Rodale: The research she obtained from the Institute for her book *Oriental Vegetables* had helped set her course for the future. For how many is that true? we asked—and have been answered by a number of our lifetime subscribers, and their descendants who now subscribe themselves. We've heard too from new-to-gardening



Gen X- and Y-ers who come to us for answers they can trust. And we've enjoyed working with organic companies where the founders' second or even third generation are growing their legacy and taking organic securely into the mainstream. At Rodale, we've just welcomed the first member of the founding family's fifth generation (aka G5) born the first week of January in this, our 70th year. So organics, *Organic Gardening*, and Rodale are about nothing if not regeneration. Bringing this thought home with me and undertaking a regenerative program of my own, called spring cleaning, I've been

sorting out boxes full of old research notes, plant lists, garden plans, and photo albums of my former gardens in England, Texas, and Iowa. If *only* I could stop mulling over the story each snapshot tells. It was while fossicking through one album that a sheet of typescript wafted free—a poem by a friend who was an early influence on my life and whose memory I cherish: the late Jean Parrish, of Chicago. Jean anticipated the future as, she said, a "long-term, nonconstructive worrier." But in reality her profound love of gardens, enjoyment of good food, and cats of all kinds kept a youthful, insouciant swing in her gait. Sound like anyone you know?

A yellow cat upon the grass in spring
Is lovelier than almost anything
Can be: forget the golden daffodil.
Dismiss the sheen upon the wood dove's bill.
Ignore the ringlets of the hyacinth,
The violets clustered round the plinth
Of the crumbling column: none of them may
Compare, in any discernible way,
With the dazzling, glittering solar blaze
Of a yellow cat in these green spring days.

4/22/85

Ethne Clarke Editor in Chief

OrganicGardening.com

Two New E-books

Grow your digital library with OG's

70th Anniversary Cookbook. Culled from 7 decades of Organic Gardening, it's a tasty journey down memory lane.

Seed Starts and Smarts, a nononsense guide to raising plants from seed, joins Compostology 1-2-3 on our growing list of guides to the skills and abilities of good organic gardening.

OG Getaway

Join us for a long and luxe weekend!

We're off to Napa-Sonoma's premier wineries, olive oil producers, and artisanal cheese makers. We'll be staying at boutique inns and enjoying gourmet meals, as well as foraging in the forest with an expert mycologist for a few early taste treats.

Photo Ops

Mark your calendar! March 26—
publication day for *The Photographic*Garden, by Matthew Benson—is
also the opening day for our next
photo contest. The theme is "Tell
Your Garden Story," and we're looking for the best photo you've taken
of your garden. So hoover the lawn,
deadhead the rhodos, and fluff that
mulch! Then get the camera out.

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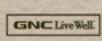


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- · a supply of your favorite Espoma products
- · a package of gardening books, tools and seeds
- · a one-year subscription to Organic Gardening



NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN. A purchase will not improve your chances of winning. Void where prohibited. The contest will begin at 12:00 am EST on March 7, 2012 and end at 11:59 pm EST on June 5, 2012. Open only to legal residents of 48 United States and DC (excluding residents of Rhode Island, Arizona, Guam, Puerto Rico, Canada, and all other US territories and possessions) who are 18 years of age or older. Rodale Inc., 400 South Tenth Street, Emmaus, PA 18098-0099 is the operator of this contest. For a complete list of rules, please visit www. OrganicGardening.com/EspomaGreenGardenContestRules.

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We occasionally make subscribers' names available to companies whose products or services may be of interest to Organic Gardening readers. If you'd prefer not to be included, you may request that your name be removed from promotion lists. Write to Organic Gardening, 400 S. 10th St., Emmaus, PA 18098-0099.

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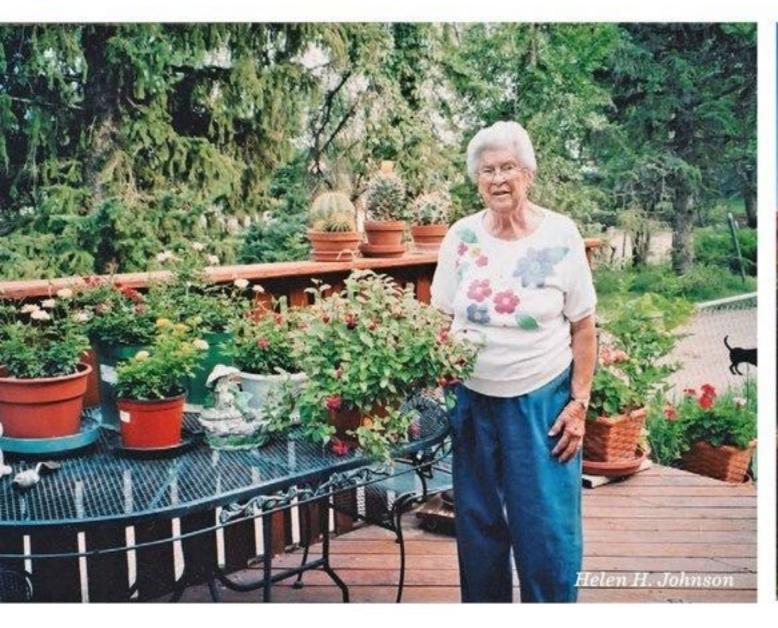
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CELEBRATE



Early in our history, Organic Gardening offered lifetime subscriptions to our readers. In celebra- Frank O. Meyer tion of our 70th anniversary, Maria Rodale wrote to the group, which today numbers 26 original subscribers and their descendents. Many of them replied and shared memories of their years with Organic Gardening.

A Lifetime of Thanks

Sincere thanks for so many years of Organic Gardening in response to my ages-ago lifetime subscription. Now that I'm retired but still gardening in very rural Connecticut, I learn something new and helpful from each issue. Organic Gardening renewed my determination to continue living as organically as possible in those longago days when I was the only one in my family and neighborhood who practiced organic methods.

Now I celebrate the current availability of organic foods and advice and credit them with contributing heavily to my and my garden's good health. I salute Organic Gardening for providing 70 years of sensible, constructive gardening methodology, thereby being a leading influence in the rise of organics.

> Dorothy LeGeyt East Hartland, Connecticut

Since my teens, I had always been somewhat interested in gardening. In 1947, I was introduced through literature to the principles of organic gardening and composting. So when I received my first issue of Organic Gardening in 1948 along with an offer of a lifetime subscription, I was primed and eager to go.

I passed my 90th birthday and retired in November 2011. However, during all that time I have continued to be an active gardener following and looking forward each month to receiving my Organic Gardening magazine—and through those principles supplying most of my family's food. I still garden on a much more limited scale, but I look forward to each issue of Organic Gardening. God has been good to us all these years.

> Frank O. Meyer Solvang, California

Armond J. Moyer

My father, Armond J. Moyer, was the original recipient of Organic Gardening magazine from its inception. We lived in Minesite, about 11/2 miles from the original Rodale farm, and my father was friends with J.I. Rodale. They actually used to have a competition each year to see who could produce the earliest and tastiest corn and tomatoes. My father died in 1985, and then I became the recipient of his lifetime subscription given to him by J.I. My husband and I have always gardened organically. No monoculture here.

I am always thrilled with the receipt of each and every Organic Gardening magazine. It has been a delight to see it evolve over the years, as it is a rather stunning and always informative magazine.

> Elaine W. Moyer-Davis Troy, Pennsylvania

How to Reach Us Send us your comments, suggestions, questions, and tips. Email: og@rodale.com The Web: OrganicGardening.com (click Customer Service) Postal mail: Organic Gardening Editors, 400 South 10th St., Emmaus, PA 18098-0099



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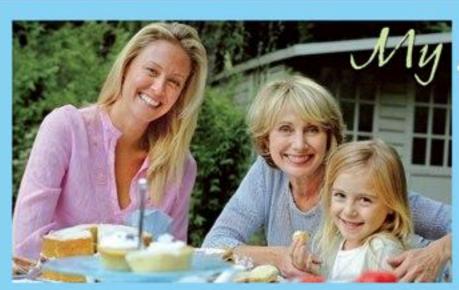






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LETTERS

Helen H. Johnson

After many years, it is time to cancel the lifetime subscription of my mother, Helen H. Johnson. I was a teenager when Mom joined the elite group of organic gardeners, and I remember the financial sacrifice it required. It was a commitment she never regretted. Mom moved to Mississippi to live with me for the last few years of her life. She continued to garden as much as her limited physical condition permitted. She often waited for me to leave so that she could visit the garden outside her bedroom window. Without the help of her walker, she enjoyed the freedom to weed and deadhead "her garden" without interference from a mere Master Gardener. Gardening continued to be her passion until the last days of her 93 years on earth. When she could no longer make the journey, I was dispatched with the specific order to bring something with blossoms home. Your magazine helped enhance a love of gardening that was my mother's passion.

> Cynthia Pannier Brandon, Mississippi

Nick M. Rini

I am writing on behalf of Nick M. Rini. Nick was a lifetime subscriber to Organic Gardening, and passionate about organic gardening before I met him in 1971. Unfortunately, 2009 put an end to most of his gardening. But he still enjoys the magazine, as do I.

Mrs. Nick M. (Alice) Rini Hartville, Ohio

Stanley Rutkowski

My father-in-law, Stanley Rutkowski, was a lifetime subscriber. My husband, Dan, remembers visiting the Rodale farm in Pennsylvania in 1959 with his father. Stan was interested in organic gardening from that time until just before his death in 2002. He taught all the family a great deal about nutrients and the necessity of eating organic. Some of the things we used to chuckle at are becoming mainstream today.

> Laura Rutkowski Dunnellon, Florida

MODEL

(classic) Books could be filled with the reader tips Organic Gardening this tip! has received over the past 70 years. Though common practice now, some were radical for their times.

Coffee Grounds (July 1947)

It might interest your readers to know that refuse coffee grounds make an excellent earthworm food. If you add old coffee grounds to a compost heap, earthworms multiply very rapidly. This, I feel sure, helps to accelerate the making of compost, not to mention providing a means for disposing of an otherwise useless product.

> Philip H. Smith Pawling, New York

Cabbage Butterflies (May 1952)

Cabbage butterflies are repelled by tomatoes, rosemary, sage, and peppermint, and the asparagus beetle by tomatoes. Such crops can therefore be used as protective inter-crops. Nasturtiums among the fruit trees will reduce destruction by aphids. The flea beetle shuns tomatoes and is driven away by shade, and dislikes a crumbly soil.

L.F. Easterbrook

Garlic-Pepper Spray Stops Bugs (January 1968)

To control insects, I use powdered garlic and black pepper in equal parts in a pint of hot water. Let it sit till it cools by about half, then strain through a dairy straining pad or something similar. This mix has done exceptionally well for me. It sprays easily from a hand sprayer and really stops the bugs.

> Martin Stansbury Tremont, Illinois

Shovel Sifter (October 1979)

A large aluminum snow shovel drilled full of holes is great for sifting soil over seedbeds. Simply scoop, shake, and watch the fine soil stream down as the shovel collects the rocks.

> Treska Lindsay Arden, North Carolina



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LETTERS

Rabbit Residue to the Rescue (March 1992)

We have a quick and easy way to add nitrogen to our compost pile: Our rabbit cages are built directly over our compost bin. The manure from our organically raised animals falls right where it's needed most—no hauling, bending, or lifting required.

> Karen Kaleta-Johnson Franklin, North Carolina

Electric Tomatoes (February 1984)

I use electrical wire ties [editor's note: i.e., zip ties] instead of string to tie up tomato plants. They're used by electricians to tie bunches of wire together. You can buy them at any electrical supply store. They're plastic, so they don't rot or break and can be reused year after year. I use the 8-inch ties. They all have a small clip that locks in a series of teeth to hold the tie securely to the stake.

Anthony Siracusa Sewell, New Jersey

Clover Mites Take a Powder (July 1966)

Ordinary talcum powder sprinkled on windowsills, at doorways, around baseboards, and around the outside foundation of your home will rid the place of pesky clover mites.

> Mrs. Wilma Koelhing Elbert, Colorado

Planting Problem Solved

(February 1959)

I have had trouble getting seed of certain plants started, due mostly to birds of all kinds. By accident, I have found a solution to the problem. I picked up a roll of old, discarded screening, the kind that is used on ordinary screen doors and windows. I cut it in 18-inch widths and nailed some old laths on each side. Now when I plant anything, I place this screen over the bed until the plants are well started. It not only keeps out the birds, but many other pests as well.

O.L. Perkins Bakersfield, California

Ground-Stored Carrots (June 1975)

I live in Minnesota, with long, cold winters. I discovered that the best way to keep carrots from freezing is to cover the row with 2 to 3 feet of leaves, then take a wide strip of plastic and cover them over, and then add several more feet of leaves. You would be surprised how well they keep. We've been able to have fresh carrots all winter long. They stay crisp and sweet-a wonderful treat to have in the winter.

> Mildred Brennan Stillwater, Minnesota

Send us your tips

Email your tips to us at og@rodale.com or mail to Organic Gardening Editors, 400 South 10th St., Emmaus, PA 18098. Include your mailing address, email address, and telephone number. Submissions should be your original work and no more than 100 words. Submissions. including photos and illustrations, become the property of Rodale, and cannot be returned. We don't test these tips, so we can't guarantee they will work in every garden. But we do screen out anything we think might be harmful.

"We Love This Tip!" Rules

No purchase necessary to enter and purchase will not improve your chance at selection. Void where prohibited. Must be over 18 and legal resident of 49 US or DC (EXCLUDING RESIDENTS OF AZ) or Canada (EXCLUDING RESIDENTS OF PROVINCE OF QUEBEC). For official rules, go to OrganicGardening. com/readertip. Rodale Inc., 400 South 10th St., Emmaus, PA 18098-0099, is the operator. Organic Gardening will select the tip to receive the award based on the following: (1) effectiveness and insightfulness of the advice, and (2) adherence to the word-count limitation. The decision of the editor in chief of Organic Gardening is final.



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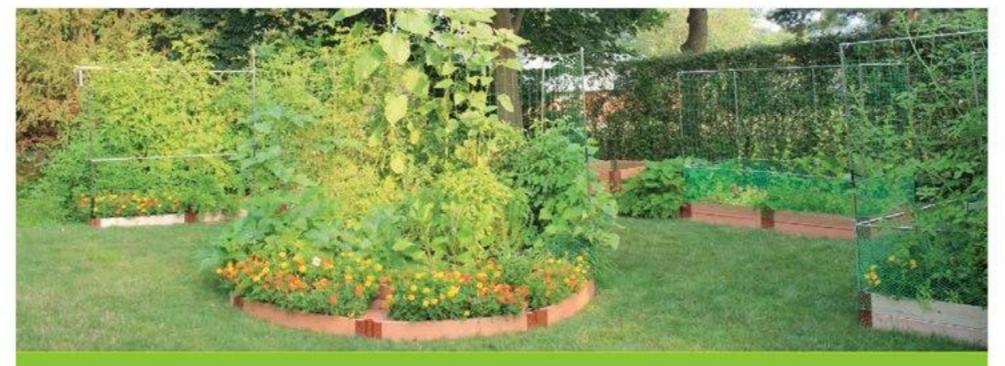
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coast of Ireland tell an altogether different kind of story, as Larkcom and her husband, Don, were to discover for themselves when in 2002 they moved to rural West Cork. Their new home, Donaghmore Farmhouse, came with a gently sloping, free-draining, south-facing half-acre of land situated less than a mile from the salty, wind-battered Atlantic coastline. The couple arrived, Larkcom remembers, in the middle of what felt like a hurricane. "We'd thought our previous garden in Suffolk was windy, but it was nothing compared to what we experience here. Plants would get uprooted, defoliated, or burnt black, and some things just wouldn't grow at all."

And so the couple quickly became what she later jokingly referred to as "windbreak

bores," researching the subject so thoroughly that Larkcom even bought her very own handheld anemometer to measure the speed of those searingly salty, southwesterly gales. The solution, they finally decided, lay in the construction of a sturdy, 6-foot-high windbreak made of timber and recyclable polyethylene netting that was planted on both sides with a mix of tough, salt-tolerant deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs. This would run straight along parts of the garden boundaries before zigzagging along the upper stretch of the windiest, western side. Secondary, internal windbreaks would offer a further line of defense, while even the farm's gates would be covered with rigid, greenhouse ventilation mesh to prevent potential wind tunnels.

Decision made, a scaled design drawing of Larkcom's dream garden followed, created with the help of architect and family friend Richard Grierson. With its distinctive, fan-shaped potager partly inspired by a visit that Larkcom had paid to Solveig Bjerre

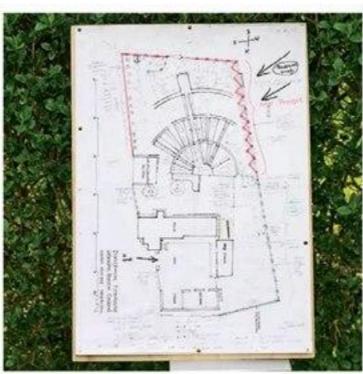
Blown Away!

Salt-laden gales from the Atlantic Ocean shaped this garden's design.

ack in 1997, when the esteemed British-born horticulturist and award-winning author Joy Larkcom wrote in her book *Creative Vegetable Gardening* of how "shelter from wind is probably the most undervalued factor in vegetable gardening," she was still living and gardening in the flatlands of Suffolk, an eastern county in England that is noted for low rainfall and the relative rarity of violent gales.

But equivalent statistics for the wild and windswept southwest



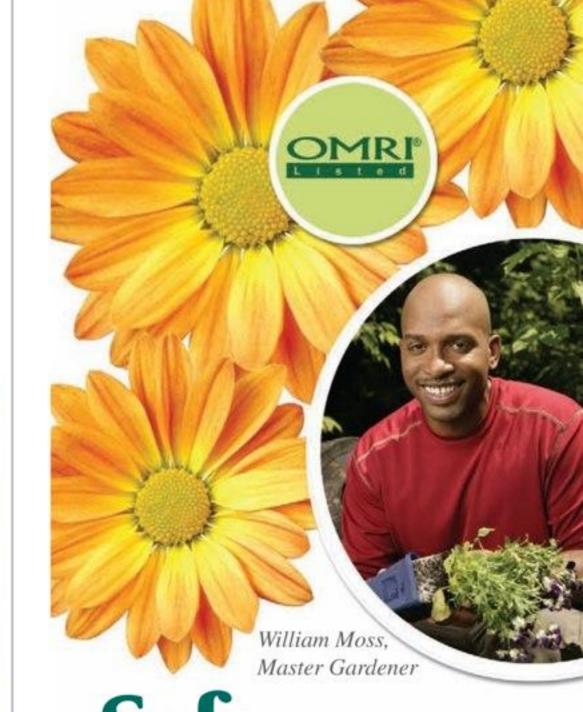




Opposite, left to right: Donaghmore Farmhouse, with its cloud-pruned, evergreen escallonia hedge. • Larkcom's well-loved tools. This page, top left: Joy Larkcom. Above: Detailed plans helped create a garden that flourishes in spite of high winds and salt air. Left: In this practical but beautiful garden, tulips and other ornamentals are mingled among the

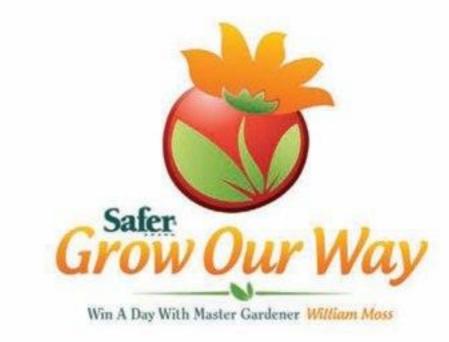
vegetables.

Hanghøj's Munach Herb Garden in eastern Denmark, the garden's design features three graceful, concentric arcs, all linked by a central allée of trained apple trees (protected on each side with parallel windbreaks). The "spokes" of the potager fan are internal windbreaks, protecting cordon-trained soft fruit such as gooseberries and red currants. Positioned between these is a collection of "pie-slice" shaped beds.



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DESIGN LIKE A PRO

The formal framework, the color-themed flowerbeds intermingled with fruit and vegetables, and the imaginative use of fruit as a decorative and structural feature are all a reflection of Larkcom's long-held belief that a vegetable garden can be both beautiful and productive. It's an ethos shaped and informed by the many gardens around the world that she's visited. Gardens in the United States, including the community gardens of New York and Boston and the "parking strip gardens" of Seattle and Portland, have proved especially inspirational. So, too, have its gardeners. Of the six trips to the States she's made lecturing, researching, and garden visiting, Larkcom recently said that America "was always a tremendous source of ideas and inspiration because of the extraordinary enthusiasm I encountered from the people I met."

As for how Donaghmore's garden has fared in the years since its now much-renowned windbreaks were erected, the answer is quite remarkably well. An astonishing wealth of colorful flowers, fruit, salad greens, and vegetables now grows in this Irish coastal potager as well as in the nearby raised vegetable beds and greenhouse. All are abundant proof that being a "windbreak bore" pays off handsomely and that the garden's greatest enemy—that roaring, salty southwesterly—has slowly been forced to beat a reluctant retreat. Personally, I like to think that it recognized the caliber of its adversaries. —Fionnuala Fallon

Left to right:
Larkcom in her
greenhouse. Her new
book, Just Vegetating:
A Memoir, reflects
on a life of gardening.
• A view in late spring
along the garden's
central allée of fruit
trees, which provides
a windbreak for the
garden. • A raised
bed filled with tasty
Chinese greens.





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Heritage Irises

(Iris hybrids)

or the ancient Greeks, Iris was the goddess of the rainbow, who carried messages between earth and sky. It seemed obvious to identify her with the three-petaled flowers whose colors brightened European streambeds and meadows. The iris often is acclaimed as the stylized flower depicted in the fleur-de-lis, the symbol of French royalty since the 12th century. With its tall, slender leaves and elegantly formed flowers, it was a common motif in Art Nouveau.

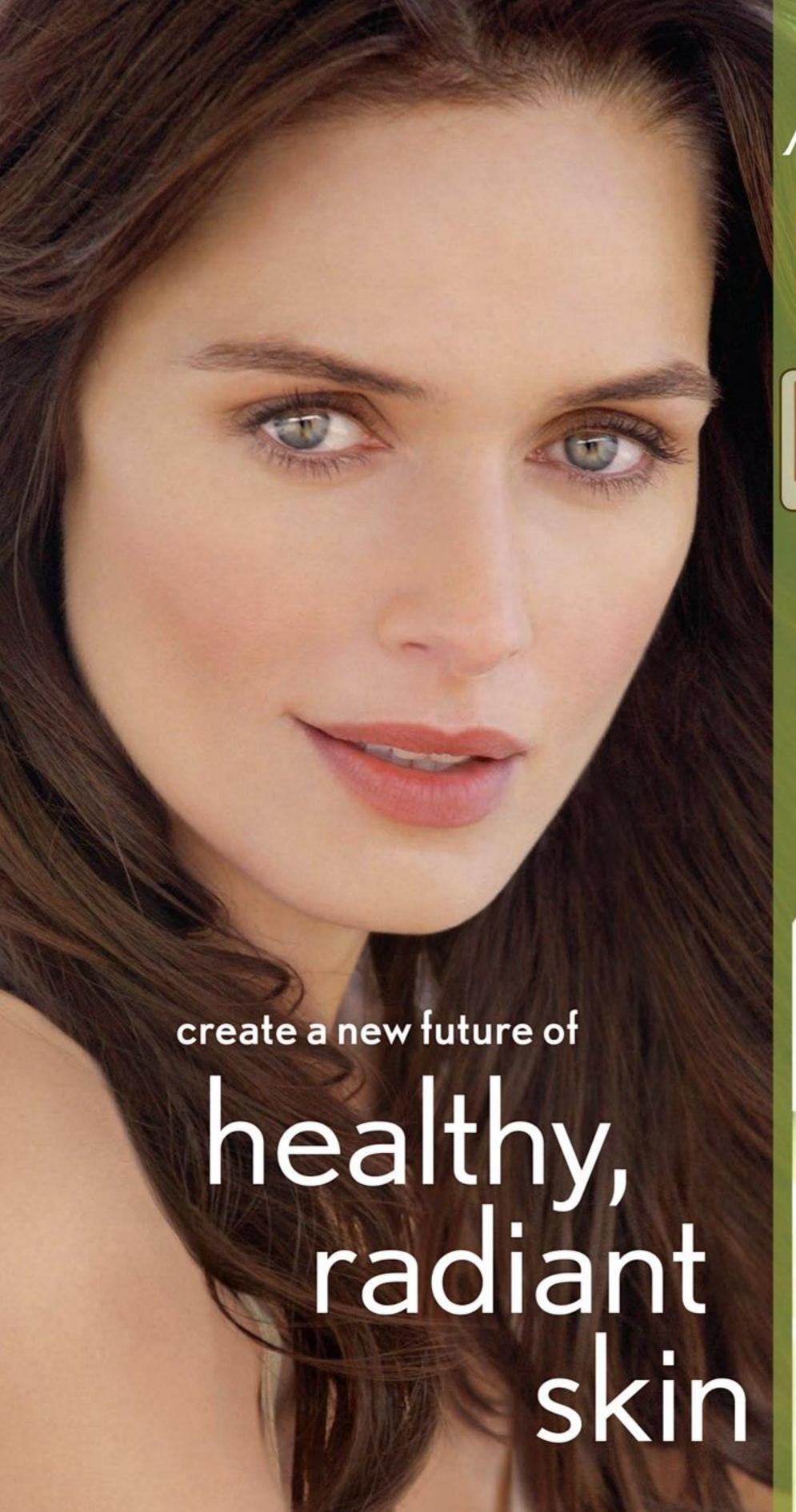
There are more than 300 species of irises from all the temperate regions of the world, including North America, and natural hybrids are common. Garden cultivars had appeared in Europe by the 16th century and followed settlers to the New World. A big boom in breeding came after 1830, and by 1939, the American Iris Society (AIS) counted more than 19,000 iris species and hybrids, with more introduced every year.

Most of these are bearded irises, with a complex ancestry that includes an early hybrid, Iris × germanica, as well as various European species. What makes them "bearded" is the fuzz (actually a landing pad for pollinating insects) on the falls, the three sepals that drape gracefully down beneath the "standards," the three petals that stand up. Newer cultivars are ever more ornate, with elaborate ruffles and intricate patterns of color all across the rainbow.

But not all gardeners share the taste for elaboration. They feel that the allure of the new has led to too many overwrought irises, often at the expense of fragrance and vigor. They are fascinated by older varieties-with simpler, cleaner lines and fewer frills, but usually more toughness and fragrance-that have fallen out of catalogs, surviving only in old gardens, cemeteries, and other out-of-the-way places.

Thousands of varieties of bearded irises exist, though finding and identifying many of the older ones requires detective work. And this is part of the fun of growing them. Shown here: 1. 'Barbara Walther'. 2. 'W.J. Fryer'. 3. 'Plumeri'. 4. 'Stepping Out'. 5. 'Highland Chief'. 6. 'Art of Raphael'.





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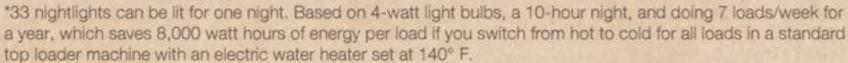


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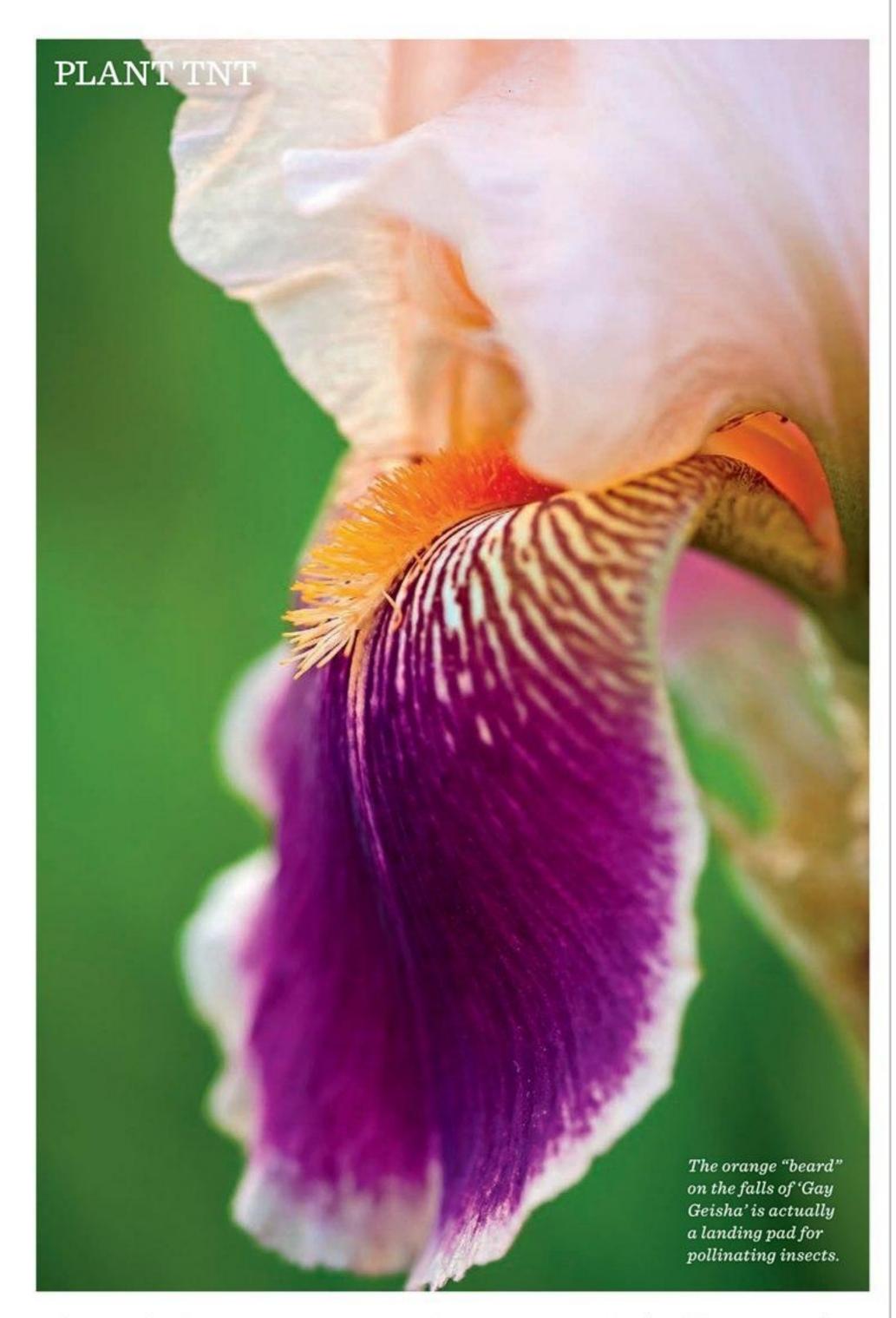
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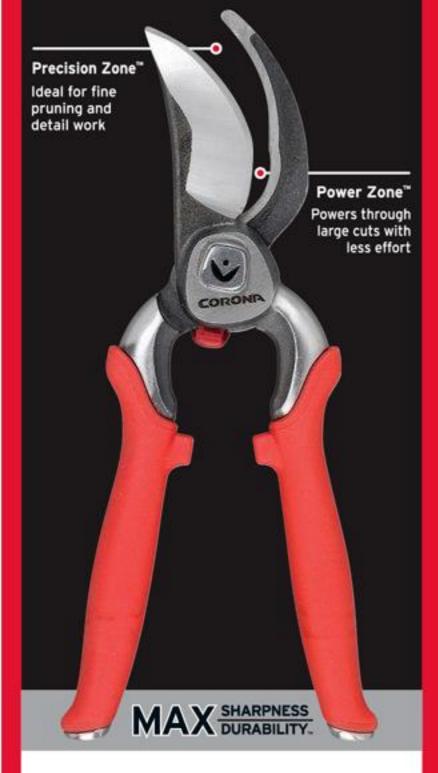


So just as heirloom tomatoes were rescued by gardeners who love both their flavor and their stories, old irises have found champions. The Historic Iris Preservation Society, which is part of the AIS, is dedicated to preserving iris varieties, including bearded irises, that are more than 30 years old.

Gesine Lohr treasures an iris with blooms the rose-and-orange colors of an autumn sunset. In the 1930s, it grew in her grandmother's garden in New Jersey. Today, 'Indian Chief' lives on in pots in Lohr's garden in Alameda, California, and in the gardens of all those to whom she has passed it on. Lohr and other historic-iris devotees aim to save and identify as many as possible of the thousands of varieties that have come and almost gone since the 19th century.



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PLANT TNT

These gardeners don't spend much time talking about iris care, because bearded irises, especially older varieties, are so easy to grow. They need full sun and well-drained soil that is amply enriched with organic matter such as compost. Mulch in cold winters and watering during dry spells can help, but old irises often thrive untended

When clumps get large and crowded and flower less, which tends to happen every 3 to 5 years, irises are easy to divide. Just lift the cluster of rhizomes-swollen underground stems-with a garden fork, gently tease it into sections, and replant them. Or give some away. The only serious pest problem is iris borers, insect larvae that tunnel through the rhizomes. If you spot them, eradicate the infested plant, and plant different irises somewhere else in the garden.

Bearded irises are best planted in summer or fall, no later than six weeks before your area's first freeze. Situate the rhizomes just at the soil surface with the roots spread out underneath. "Like a duck," Lohr says. "Their feet are in the water but their back is above."

Irises "don't take much mollycoddling," says Boyce Tankersley, director of living plant documentation at the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe, Illinois, who grows a number of historic varieties at home. "I don't spray them, I don't fertilize them any more than I fertilize anything else, and they keep coming back and giving me a good show."

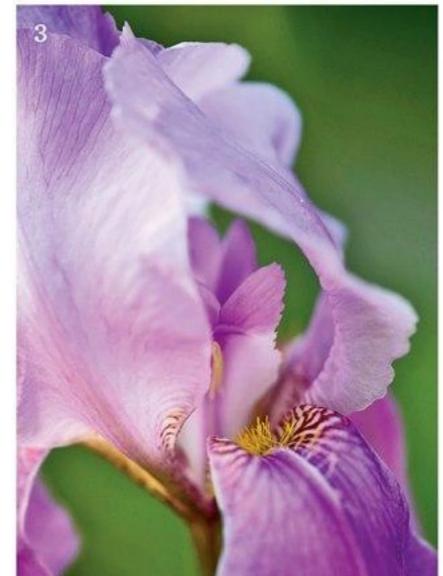
Gardeners intrigued by the idea of growing sturdy, fragrant irises with interesting stories can start by visiting an iris garden in May, when bearded irises are in full, glorious bloom. One of the most spectacular is the Presby Memorial Iris Garden in Upper Montclair, New Jersey (presbyirisgardens.org), where plants are arrayed by the decade in which the cultivars were introduced. A local chapter of the American Iris Society (irises.org) or the Historic Iris Preservation Society (hips-roots. com) can point you to the right garden or grower. -Beth Botts

For more information, see Find It Here, p. 101.

A good number of heritage irises are fragrant and some even bloom again later in the season. 1. 'Loreley'. 2. 'Mary Frances'. 3. 'Dogrose'.









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Build a Raised Bed

hen it came time to build new raised beds for the Organic Gardening Test Garden last spring, the executive director of the Rodale Institute, where our test garden is located, recommended a simple design. Mark Smallwood-"Coach," as he's known around the Institute-showed us how to build a raised bed using four pieces of untreated framing lumber, with not a scrap of waste. Each bed requires:

- Three 2-by-12 boards, 8 feet long
- · One 2-by-4 board, 8 feet long
- 2½-inch galvanized deck screws (approximately 28 screws)

When purchasing lumber, inspect it for straightness. Straighter boards will result in tighter corners. Cut one of the 2-by-12 boards in half to make two 4-foot lengths; these will be the two end pieces.

Cut the 2-by-4 board into one 4-foot length, to serve as a center brace, and four 1-foot lengths for corner supports. The two uncut boards will become the sides of the raised bed (1).

After drilling pilot holes, attach one of the side boards to an end board with three evenly spaced screws (2, 3).

Place one of the corner supports in the angle between the boards and attach it to the side board with three screws (4). Repeat for the remaining three corners.

Attach the center brace to join the two sides at their midpoints. Use a square to position the brace at a right angle to the sides (5). The brace prevents the sides from bowing outward when the bed is filled with soil.

The finished bed measures 4 feet by 8 feet—a size that makes seed sowing, weeding, and harvesting easy-and raises the planting level by almost a foot (6). The wood can be stained, if desired. We liked Coach's raised beds so much, we built 10 of them for the garden. -Doug Hall







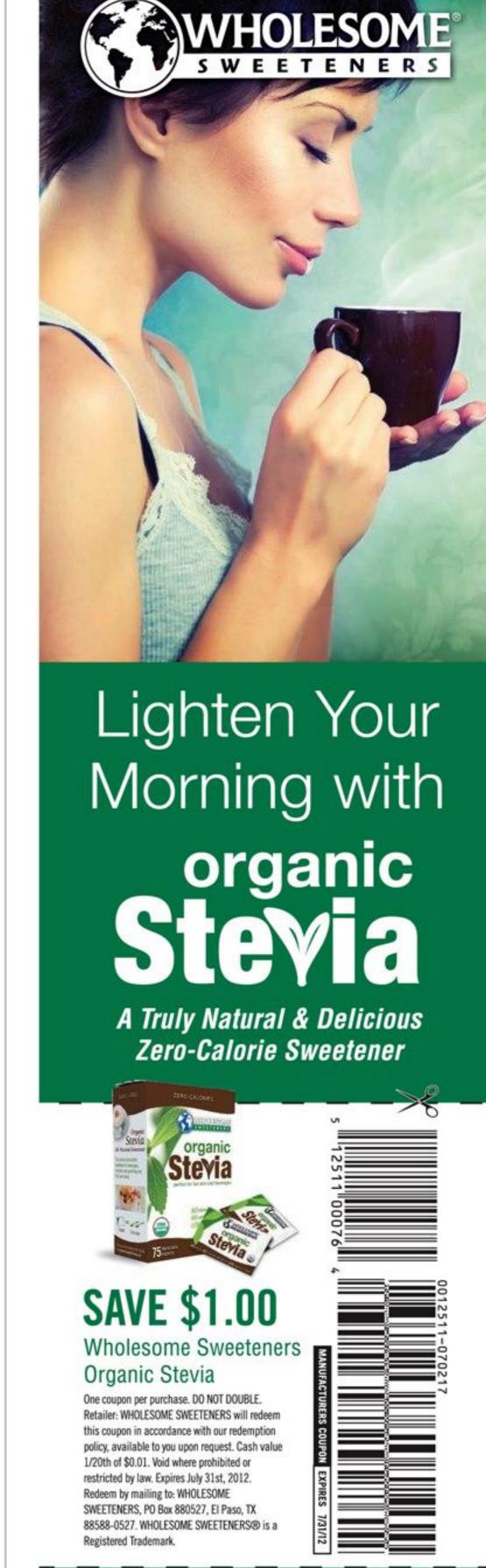






Why Garden in Raised Beds?

- · The soil can be liberally supplemented with compost and other organic amendments, creating a rich and porous root zone that nurtures plants.
- · The bed sides act as an edging, helping to keep out weeds and turfgrass.
- · Many gardeners, including those of restricted mobility, find that the slightly higher soil level facilitates maintenance.
- · The elevated soil of raised beds drains quickly and doesn't become waterlogged, and it warms up earlier in spring. (Although those two characteristics are beneficial in cool, rainy climates, gardeners in hot, dry regions may consider them to be negatives.)









Presprouting Peas

ave you ever opened a seed packet only to discover that the seeds inside are an unnaturally brilliant color? Fluorescent pink, perhaps? Organic gardeners, beware: The dye is your warning that the seeds have been treated with synthetic fungicides. Most of us wouldn't want to handle seeds laced with toxic chemicals, much less eat the crops grown from them.

Peas are frequent victims of this kind of seed treatment. Young pea plants thrive in cool weather and tolerate light frosts, and that puts them high on the list of vegetables to sow in early spring. But if the soil is too cold, the seeds may rot before they germinate—the reason some seed companies give their pea seeds a chemical bath.

Fortunately, plenty of seed companies sell only untreated seeds. And there's an easy way to get peas up and growing in cold soil that doesn't involve chemicals or pink dye. The trick, many gardeners have discovered, is to presprout the seeds before sowing.

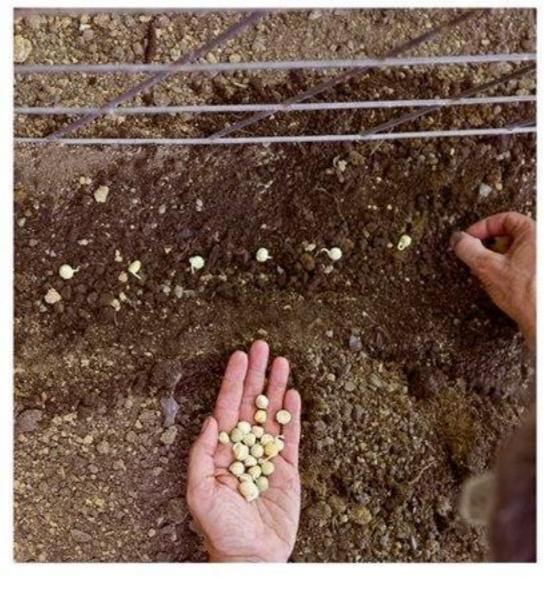
Measure out the quantity of seeds you intend to plant. Put them in an airtight container or plastic bag between two layers of wet paper towels. Close the container and leave it at room temperature. Check the seeds after 24 hours; if the seeds have plumped up and the embryonic roots have begun to extend away from the seeds, as in the photo at bottom left, it's time to plant. If not, close the container and wait another day. Fresh seeds usually spring to life in 1 to 3 days.

The tiny roots are fragile and easily snapped off at this stage, so handle the presprouted seeds gingerly and plant them quickly. Dust the damp seeds with an inoculant powder, if you wish. (Inoculants for legumes contain symbiotic bacteria that form nitrogen-containing nodules on the plant roots, nourishing the pea plants and whatever crops follow.) Sow the presprouted peas immediately in compost-enriched soil. -D.H.

For more information, see Find It Here on page 101.







Four Reasons to Bare Your Soil

Mulch provides many benefits to the organic gardener: It helps maintain soil moisture, moderates soil temperatures, protects soil structure, and reduces weeding. Yet there are times when bare ground is better than mulch. Here are four situations that call for exposed soil.

Early spring sowing. Seeds are slow to germinate—and perennials slow to emerge-in cold soil. A thick layer of mulch acts as an insulating blanket, preventing the ground from warming. Rake the mulch aside temporarily to allow sunlight to warm and dry the soil in early spring. Don't move the mulch too far, though, because you'll want it again as the season heats up.

Self-seeding annuals. Annual poppies,

There are many great reasons to use mulch. But now and then, mulch causes more problems than it solves.

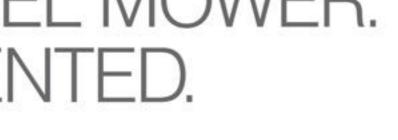
larkspur, calendula, nicotiana, cleome, and other selfseeding flowers will colonize a garden in drifts of color-so long as their seeds aren't smothered by mulch. Scatter seeds on bare ground, and in subsequent years, leave unmulched

areas where you wish seedlings to appear. Or top the soil with an inch of compost, which won't impede germinating seeds.

Moisture-sensitive perennials. Some perennials-often those that are native to arid climates or prairies, such as penstemons, coneflowers, and blanketflowers-are prone to rotting in soggy soil. Keep heavy mulches away from the crowns of these perennials, especially in winter. If winter protection is needed, cover them with airy evergreen boughs.

Eliminating pest havens. Slugs, pill bugs, and other plant-munching pests can thrive and multiply in the moist habitat created by organic mulch. If other control strategies fail, consider cutting back on mulch until the pest populations drop to tolerable levels. -D.H.





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Clockwise from left: Jomon Sugi, an oldgrowth cryptomeria in Japan. • A lumpy llareta in a Chilean desert • Welwitschia mirabilis in Namibia.



Enduring Life

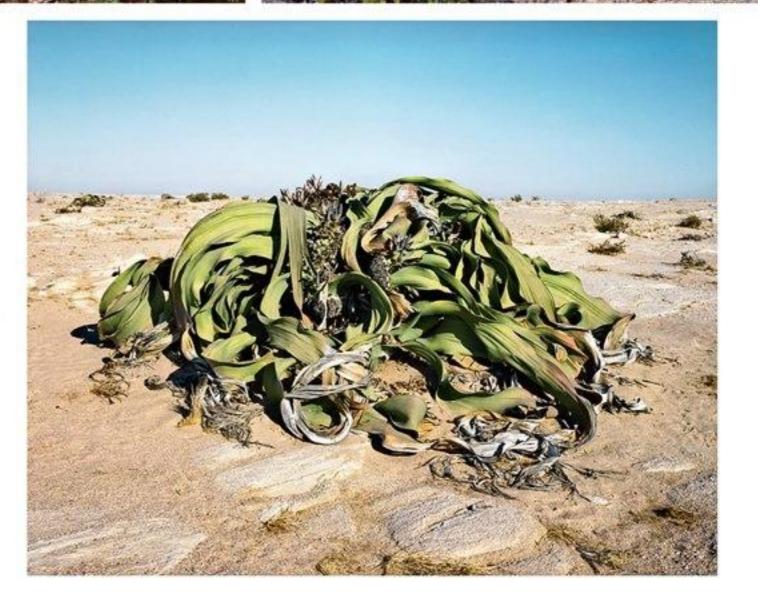
In search of nature's oldest living things

he camellia-dotted grounds at Middleton Place, the historic Charleston, South Carolina, estate built by politician Henry Middleton, are the oldest landscaped gardens in the United States. But the azaleas and magnolias planted there in 1741 are mere toddlers compared with the plants photographer Rachel Sussman has spent the past 7 years documenting.

Two-hundred-seventy-year-old trees? Too young. This artist has made it her mission to find and photograph the world's oldest living species, be they exotic bushes or microscopic bacteria.

"I have always felt a strong affinity for the natural world, and I started photographing as a means of creative expression at a very early age," Sussman says. The idea to turn her camera on ancient organisms was inspired by a trip to Japan in 2004. Several people had recommended she visit the Jomon Sugi, a tree just over 2,000 years old, on the island of Yaku Shima. "After returning home to Brooklyn, the idea crystallized to bring art, science, and philosophy together to find and photograph continuously living organisms 2,000 years old and older," she says.

She chose 2,000 years as her benchmark, she says, because she wanted to start from what we consider to be year zero and work backwards. Her travels have taken her to the ends of the



Earth-quite literally. In February, she traveled to Antarctica to photograph a 5,000-year-old moss. She learned scuba diving in order to uncover a 2,000-year-old brain coral off the island of Tobago. She finds out about these ancient species, which range from tiny fungi to gigantic trees, through a great deal of research and sometimes word of mouth. "As word has gotten out about my work," she says, "some scientists have actually contacted me requesting their discoveries be added to the project."

Scientific though her work may seem, Sussman still considers herself an artist. In her photographs, she displays natural beauty





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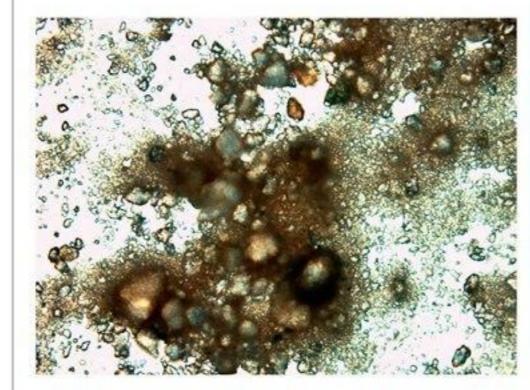
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COMMON GROUND



that could easily go underappreciated—such as the 13,000-year-old "underground forest" outside Pretoria, South Africa. Certain species of plants have adapted to the area's dry climate by migrating underground, with extensive systems of woody stems and roots growing beneath the surface and only a few short, leafy shoots visible above ground. That way, when wildfires rage through the South African bush, "it's the equivalent of getting your eyebrows singed," she says.

She photographed another plant, the llareta (Azorella compacta), in Chile's Atacama Desert, where it has grown for more than 3,000 years. "The llareta is striking for the odd shapes it takes," she says. To the untrained eye, it looks like an enormous head of broccoli, or perhaps a free-form topiary. "But it's actually a dense shrub living with little water and extreme elevation. It also happens to be related to parsley."

Among the 28 other natural wonders she has captured thus far on film: clonal forests in which dozens of trees have sprung from a single root system for 13,000 years or more; an *Actinobacteria* colony living in Siberian permafrost, which at around half a million years old is the world's oldest living thing; and the *Welwitschia mirabilis*, a coniferous tree of coastal Namibia that looks like a haphazard pile of palm fronds lying on the ground. Some of her photographic subjects disguise their age well. "An untrained eye would walk past most of the oldest organisms none the wiser," Sussman says.

Though Sussman has been witness to some of nature's most enduring creations, she says her work makes her more concerned about their downfall. Human-induced climate change is altering the ecosystems in





which many of these species have thrived for millennia. "The speed and force in which the climate is currently changing is without precedent,"

Clockwise from top
left: Bacteria living in
Siberian permafrost.
• A brain coral in
Tobago. • A "tree"
in South Africa's
underground forest.

she says. "Many of my subjects are adapted to extreme climates—desert or high altitude or polar temperatures—but should their whole ecosystems shift, they have no way to survive." With what she considers "phase one" of the project complete, she plans to focus on making a book. Her hope is that her work can lead to protections for all of the world's oldest species under UNESCO, the United Nations agency that designates important cultural and natural sites as threatened or in need of safeguarding.

"On the positive side," she says, "all these organisms have displayed remarkable resilience. We have much to learn from them collectively and as individuals." Such as: We could all learn to live with less. And slow and steady really does win the race. —Emily Main

To see more of Rachel Sussman's photographs and to order prints, visit rachelsussman.com.



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For Native Americans and European settlers, ramps were prized-they were the first green vegetable available after a long, harsh winter.

Ramps

These pungent cousins of leeks are a delicacy to be enjoyed sparingly in spring.

first tasted ramps a couple of years ago when a friend presented me with a bunch she had bought at the Union Square Greenmarket in New York City.

"You'll love these," she said as she handed me a strong-smelling cluster of leafy green stalks, wrapped in paper like a precious bouquet. "Think of them as garlicky spring onions."

She was right. I did love them. I added finely chopped ramps to risotto, folded them into scrambled eggs, and made pesto. I even went to a dinner at a local restaurant in which every course featured the pungent green. I was hooked.

The only problem was getting more. Allium tricoccum, better known as ramps or wild leeks, are available at farmers' markets for just a few weeks in early spring, and are eagerly snapped up by chefs and home cooks alike. Once available only to savvy foragers on the East Coast, these native plants have become a foodie sensation across the country.

Ramps' current popularity amuses some longtime fans of the vegetable. "In recent history, hunters and fishermen ate most of the ramps," says Jeanine Davis, an associate professor of horticultural science at North Carolina State University, who has been studying ramps since 1997. "When my husband and his friends went trout fishing in early spring, they picked ramps, fried them up with potatoes and eggs, and ate them morning, noon, and night. Unfortunately, ramps have a notorious smell that can emanate from your skin, so he'd have to sleep on the couch for several days after he got back."

But even before sportsmen discovered them, early settlers and Native Americans treasured ramps as a spring tonic, something healthy and green to eat after months of potatoes and turnips. Ramps grow in rich, moist forest areas, in a region stretching from north Georgia to Canada, and appear in very early spring, just after the snow has melted. For many people, ramps were the only green they would be



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SIMPLY FRESH

"On the one hand, we want to encourage people to appreciate and enjoy this wild, native plant. On the other hand, we don't want to encourage wiping out wild populations of the plant."

able to harvest for weeks, maybe months. Ramp festivals are still held in many parts of the South.

Even today, most of the ramps available for sale in the United States are wild, gathered by commercial foragers who can earn serious money selling them to restaurants and at farmers' markets for up to \$12 a pound. And it's that lucrative new market that worries plant specialists like Davis.

"There is concern about overharvesting," she says. "People go into the woods with picks and garbage bags and clear out an entire area." In fact, ramps are listed as a plant of special concern in several states.

In Quebec, where ramps are known as ail des bois (garlic of the woods), the Environment Department listed the plant as a "vulnerable" species more than 15 years ago, the victim of encroaching suburban development and overharvesting. Private pickers are still allowed to forage for their own consumption, but no more than 50 plants per person per year, and only outside protected zones. Sales are prohibited.

"Years ago, l'ail des bois seemed to grow everywhere," says Susan Semenak, author of Market Chronicles, a book about Montreal's famed farmers' market, Marché Jean-Talon. "Nowadays, a jar of homemade pickled ail des bois or a handful of fresh leaves for salad are rare treasures, gifts from somebody with a forager in the family experienced enough to know the last few remaining spots."



Grilling ramps tempers their assertive flavor and brings out the sweetness. Simply toss with olive oil and grill until slightly charred in places.

Hoping to avoid a similar situation in the United States, plant enthusiasts like Davis and the Smoky Mountain Native Plant Association are encouraging the commercial cultivation of ramps. And they want foragers to harvest the plants more responsibly, leaving some of the immature bulbs rather than digging up the whole clump, so the plant can continue to grow, a sustainable method long used by

the Cherokee.

Still, the situation isn't a crisis—yet. Most commercial foragers stick to areas that are easy to reach, says Roy Reehil, president of the Forager Press and the Central Adirondack

Search and Rescue Team. "I don't really see a lot of evidence of overharvesting in the more remote places I go to."

In the end, it's a delicate balancing act, says Davis. "On the one hand, we want to encourage people to appreciate and enjoy this wild, native plant," she says. "On the other hand, we don't want to encourage wiping out wild populations of the plant."

As for me, I'm thinking of supplementing my farmers' market supply of ramps with my own crop. It seems like the least I can do to preserve this precious—and delicious—American original. —Victoria von Biel

For information on growing ramps, visit OrganicGardening.com.

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The Best of Thymes

These diminutive herbs are small in stature but big in flavor.

lants are like people. Some are drama queens and faint at the first sign of drought or bad weather. Others are bullies, pushing their neighbors aside and hogging all available sunshine. And then there's thyme. It's polite to its neighbors, blooms modestly, and is useful in the garden and home. It's an herb worthy of any gardener's attention.

The genus name, Thymus, has its origin in the Greek words for soul or spirit. Thyme has long been associated with burial practices, going back as far as ancient Greece, where branches were strewn on coffins and planted at grave sites. In Egypt, oil of thyme was used in embalming, and it was believed by some that the spirits of the dead inhabited thyme blossoms. English folklore says bringing wild thyme into a house will bring death or illness.

Thyme has associations that are less dire, however. Throughout history, the herb was also a symbol of fortitude. During the French Revolution, republicans in the south of France used it as an attribute of their cause. Highland Scots concocted a drink from wild thyme to give themselves courage. There are many accounts of people making a soup from thyme and beer that was regarded by some as a possible cure for shyness. If the thyme didn't do the trick, perhaps the beer would.

There are more than 400 species of thyme, a mix of small evergreen perennials or woody subshrubs with spikes of pink, purple, or white flowers. The taller subshrubs grow 12 to 18 inches high, and most are cultivars of common thyme, Thymus vulgaris. Midsized creeping thymes grow to 6 inches high. The remaining thymes are prostrate with tiny leaves, rarely rising above 2 inches.

Native to the Mediterranean region, most thymes have the same growing requirements: lots of sunshine and well-drained, almost gravelly, soil. Plant thyme in the front of garden beds for a border that complements more showy ornamental plants, or pair thyme with ornamental bulbs, such as daffodils; their stalks will push through the thyme in early spring, flower, and die back before the thyme starts to take off in late spring. Then through the year there will be groundcover above the dormant bulbs, which will help prevent accidentally digging up bulbs.

Thyme is very well-behaved and spreads slowly. It needs consistent watering during the first year but can withstand drought conditions once well established. Regular pruning in spring and fall maintains the plants' health by removing less-productive old wood, the presence of which renders the plants less likely to survive winter because new growth is stronger and hardier.



Here are the most popular varieties to grow at home. French / common thyme

French or common thyme (Thymus vulgaris). This subshrub is the thyme of the kitchen garden. One attractive cultivar for hanging baskets is silver thyme (T. vulgaris 'Argenteus').

Lemon thyme (Thymus x citriodorus). This spreading subshrub reaches a foot tall. It's one of the best for cooking-and one of the most fragrant. Watch for variegated cultivars such as 'Aureus' (golden edges), 'Golden King' (mostly gold), and 'Silver Queen' (cream to light yellow edges).





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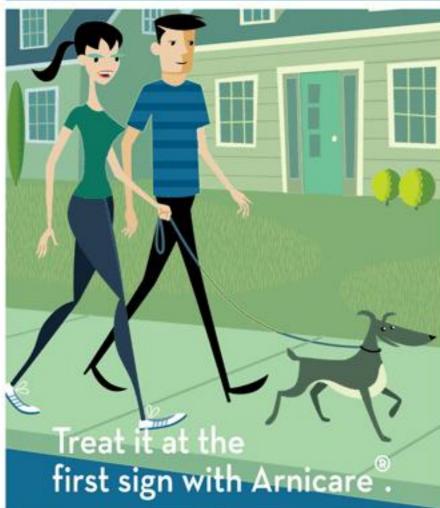
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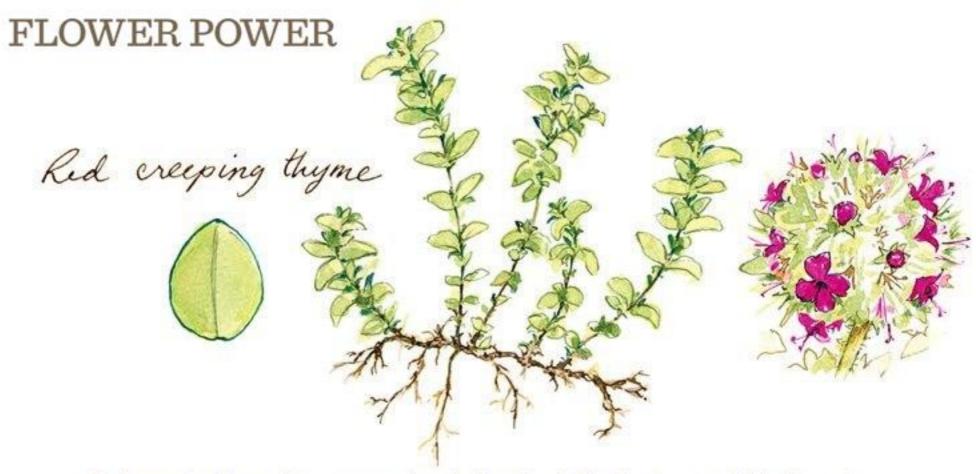






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Red creeping thyme (*T. praecox* subsp. *britannicus*). The tiny leaves of this thyme have very little scent or flavor, so it is mostly used ornamentally as groundcover. The flowers are purple to mauve. Commonly sold cultivars include 'Doone Valley', 'Kew', and 'Albus'.



Caraway thyme (Thymus herba-barona). This creeping thyme grows 2 to 5 inches tall with pink flowers. Caraway thyme comes from the islands of Corsica and Sardinia, so it can take higher levels of humidity and rain, making it a good candidate for Southern gardens.

Thyme grows from seed, but there's hardly any reason to start it that way, as it propagates easily by other methods. Thyme's horizontal growing habits mean that lateral branches easily root. Softwood cuttings can also be rooted in potting medium.

A sprig of thyme may be clipped any time to add fresh flavor to foods. Harvest culinary thymes before they bloom in early summer and a second time after Labor Day. Half of the growth can be safely clipped.

Thyme gives hearty flavor to soups, gravies, and meat sauces. It is a key ingredient in bouquets garni and herbes de Provence, two traditional herb mixes in French cuisine. Lemon thyme is especially good with poultry or when added to herbal vinegars.

Other Thymely Uses

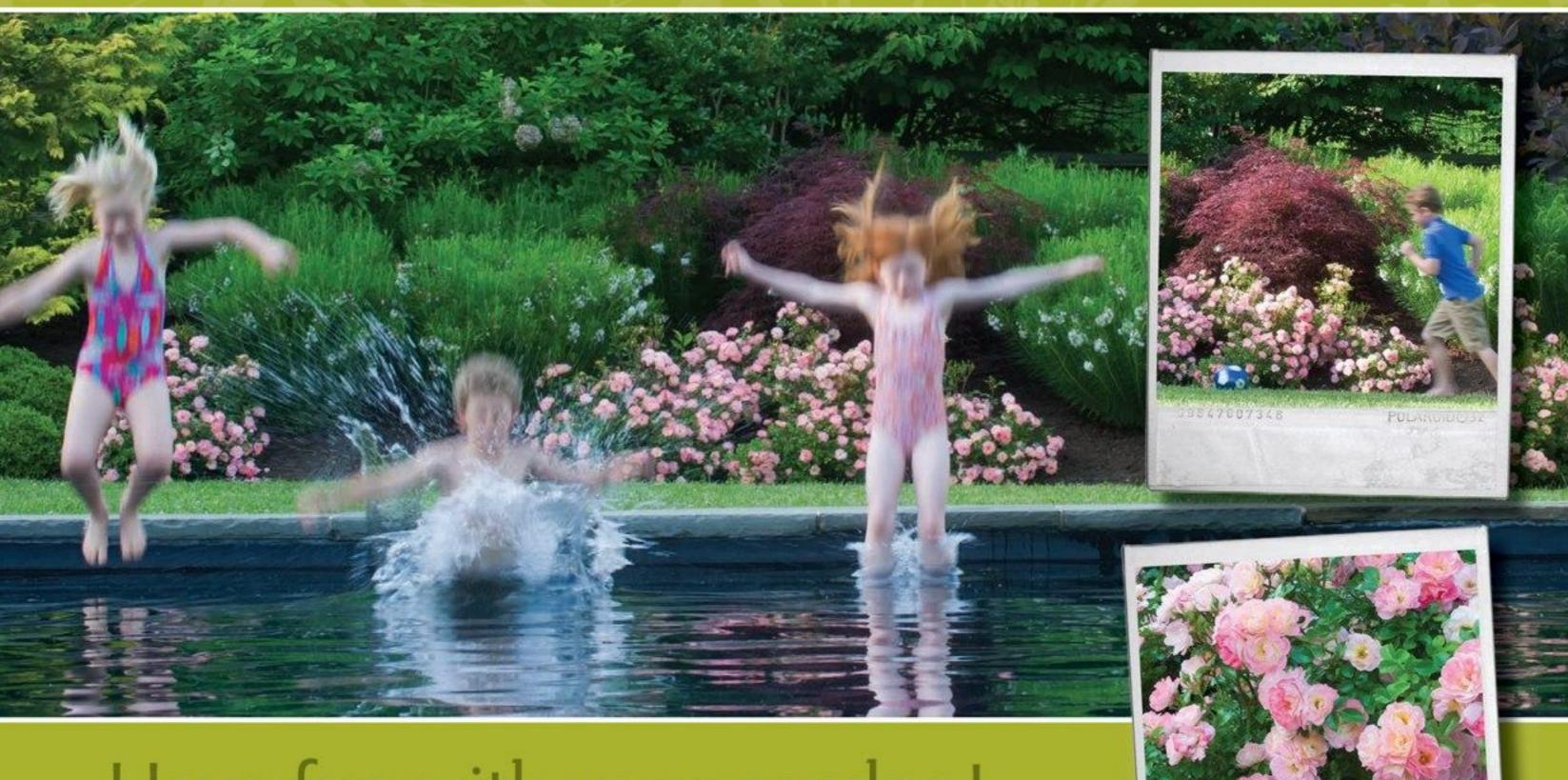
Garden thyme is the source of thymol, a chemical commonly used in oral-hygiene products for its antioxidant and antibacterial properties. Because it is also antispasmodic and an expectorant, it's beneficial in herbal teas for cough and upper respiratory complaints, and is sold as an essential oil.

Beekeepers often plant thyme near hives, believing bees that feed on thyme produce an excellent honey. Thyme is also recommended for rubbing on bee stings. It could be said that in our fast-paced world, we'd all benefit from more thyme in the garden.

-Ann McCormick

For more information, see Find It Here, p. 101.





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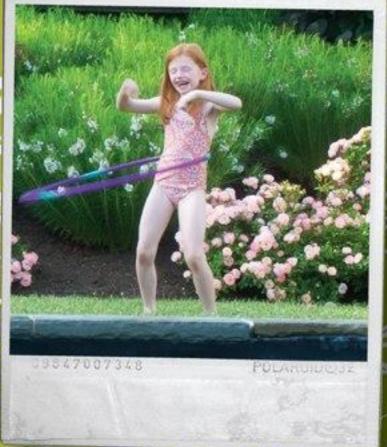


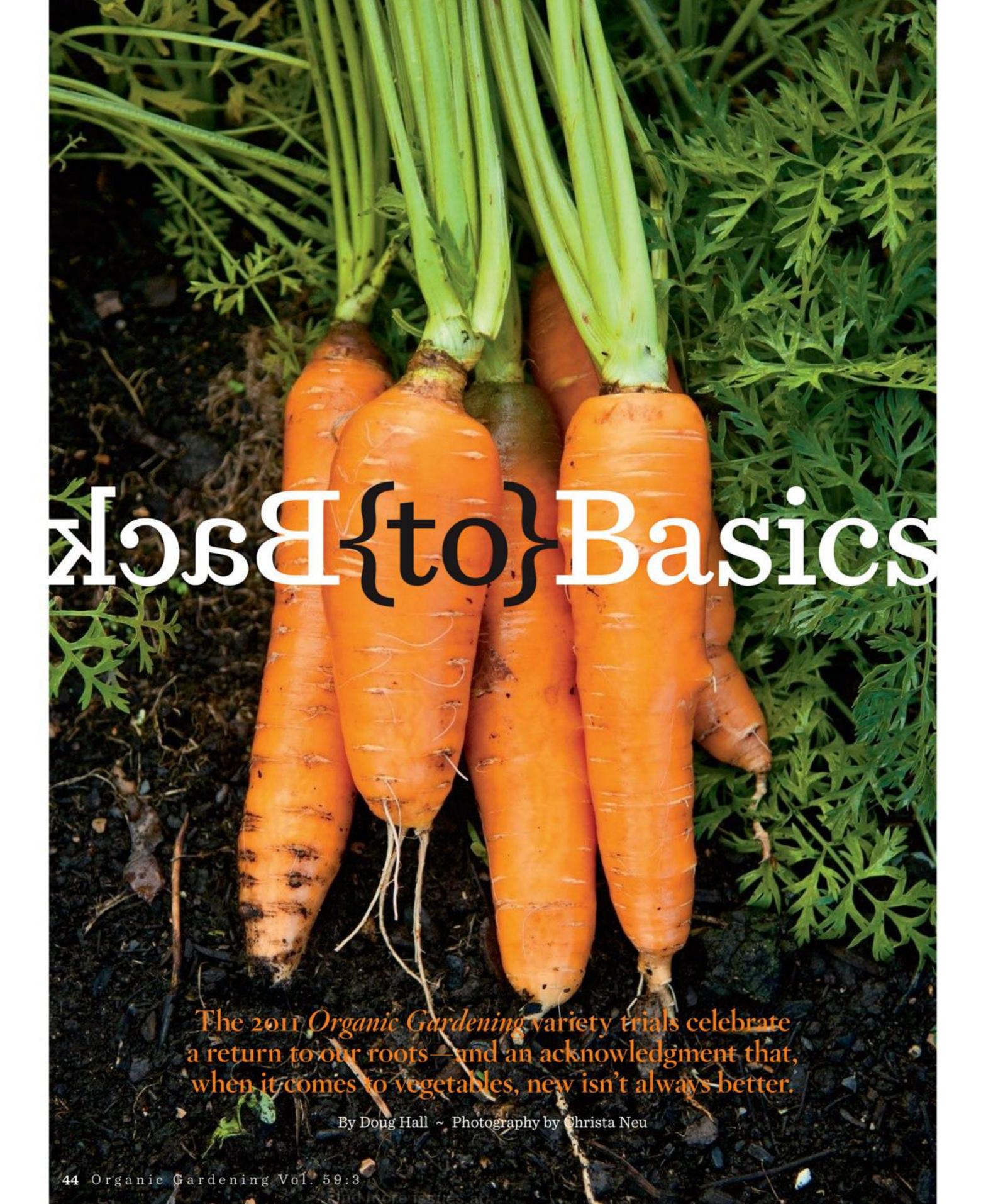


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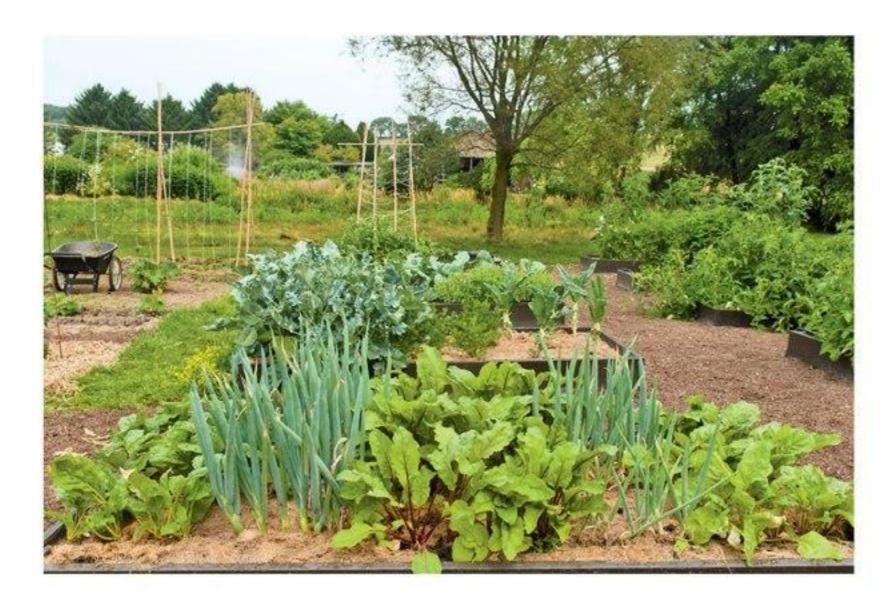




aught up in the promotion of new varieties of vegetables, gardeners can lose track of the proven performers. In the Organic Gardening Test Garden, we're as guilty as the next gardener in our obsession with all things "new and improved."

In 2011, to prepare for the 70th year of Organic Gardening, we decided to take a different approach: We brought back some of our favorite vegetable varieties from the past. At the same time, we quizzed the horticulturists at some trusted seed companies to tell us what varieties in their catalogs had undiscovered virtues outstanding vegetables that we should be growing, but weren't.

We then dedicated our trial beds at the Rodale Institute, near Kutztown, Pennsylvania, to these tried-and-true standards, familiar open-pollinated varieties, and lesser-known heirlooms. Our team of 13 test gardeners scattered around the country grew the same varieties. What follows is the best of our 2011 harvest.



{Lime Basil}

Easily grown like sweet basil, lime basil (shown at left) has a refreshing citrusy tang all its own. Use lime basil leaves to flavor marinades, salad dressings, or salsa—or brew a cup of herbal tea. Seed source: John Scheepers Kitchen Garden Seeds

Growing tip: "Harvest often! With the onset of heat, most basil varieties will start going to seed, leaving you less foliage for culinary use," says Leslie Halleck, our Dallas test gardener. Instead of pinching off individual leaves, Leslie harvests by cutting the stems back about a third, prompting new growth. "Regular harvesting will result in sturdier plants that continue producing new foliage," she says. And when the Texas sun and heat become brutal in late summer, Leslie drapes floating row covers over her basil plants to protect them from scorching.

{Carrot}

'Scarlet Nantes'

This is the carrot to turn to where the soil is heavy with clay or shallower than ideal. Not as fickle as longer varieties, 'Scarlet Nantes' (opposite) is a reliable producer of sweet, crisp roots. Nichols Garden Nursery

Growing tip: Carrots are worth the extra effort they require in clay soil, says test gardener Linda Crago, of Wellandport, Ontario. "After I've tilled my soil as finely as I can, I take my hoe and draw a good deep trough 6 to 8 inches in depth. I fill this trough with finely sifted compost and seed my carrots quite thickly," Linda says. She waters as often as twice a day if the weather is dry while the seeds are germinating. "I find the carrots germinate very well in the compost and they grow long and straight. Another bonus is that because the compost is so light, I do very little thinning, because they can push each other out of the way as they grow."

Left: In 2011, we moved the magazine's test garden to the grounds of the Rodale Institute, a leader in organic research. We started with 10 raised beds and a plot about 40 feet by 50 feet. This year, the garden continues to expand.

{Onion}

'Shimonita'

This onion starts out like a typical scallion, or bunching onion, but it just keeps growing, eventually reaching the stocky size of a leek without bolting. Harvest it at any size along the way. Territorial Seed Company

Growing tip: Barbara Miller, our test gardener in Boulder, Colorado, prefers the quality of onions grown from seeds to those grown from onion sets. "I start all my onion seeds really early, before anything else," she says. Barbara grows the seedlings in a cool hoop house, but a coldframe or indoor light setup would also work. "When the seedlings are 4 to 5 inches tall and it's time to transplant them to the garden, I soak them well and use my fingers to unbraid the tangled roots—a process that can feel a bit brutal. Each plant then gets its own hole, 4 inches or so apart, in the garden. The young onions take the rough treatment in stride."

{Broccoli}

'Piracicaba'

Combining characteristics of heading broccoli and broccoli raab, 'Piracicaba' offers a long season of miniature heads on large, bushy plants. The fall harvest is especially sweet and flavorful. Turtle Tree Biodynamic Seed Initiative

Growing tip: Gardeners everywhere, but especially in Florida, sometimes need to shield seedlings from heat and sunshine, says Andres Mejides, our test gardener in Homestead, Florida. Andres creates a temporary shelter alongside rows of newly transplanted broccoli and other vegetables, using a 3-foot-wide strip of shade cloth secured to rebar stakes with twist ties or twine threaded through the loosely woven fabric. "Rather than putting the shade cloth perfectly vertical, I like to lean it to the east, over the row," Andres says. "That way plants get protection from slightly before noon through the afternoon." He removes the shade cloth after the transplants are acclimated in the garden.

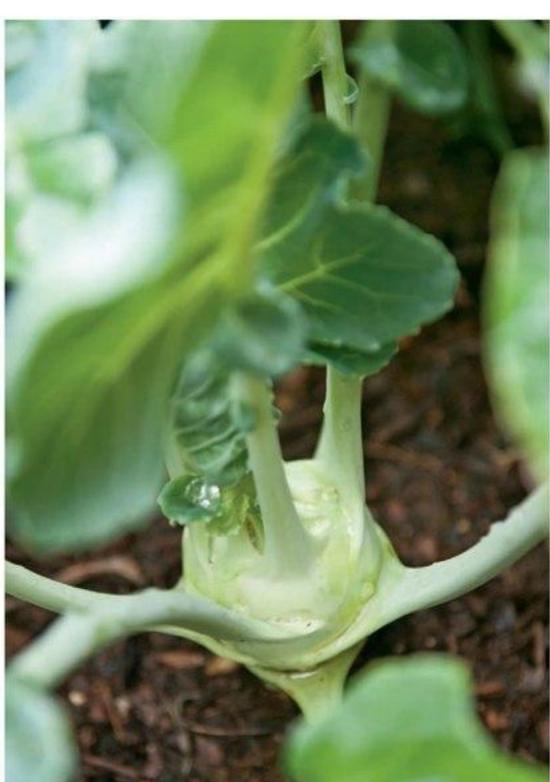
"I'm quite convinced that onions from seed grow much bigger than those from sets. Plus the seedlings are so easy to grow, it's no trouble at all."

-Barbara Miller, Boulder, Colorado



"My best kale tip is to plant it along with ornamentals in the flower border or in containers. It's stunning!" -Jackie Smith, Belle Plaine, Minnesota







{Pole Bean}

'Musica'

Gardeners who find the bean harvest to be tedious, rejoice: It takes less time to fill a basket with this big flat-podded Romano bean than with little filet beans. Best of all, stringless 'Musica' has all the flavor you expect from a bean. Renee's Garden

Growing tip: Don Boekelheide, our test gardener in Charlotte, North Carolina, grows vining beans on tepees constructed of 7-foot poles, secured at the top with twine. He inoculates beans and other legumes with the symbiotic bacteria they need to begin fixing nitrogen on their own. "'Inoculate' sounds intimidating," he says, "but all it means in this case is moistening the seed and shaking it in a bag of inoculant powder until coated. Plant immediately." The bacteria capture nitrogen from the air and deposit it in nodules on the roots, where it nourishes the bean vines.

{Kohlrabi}

'Superschmelz'

We were skeptical when the folks at Territorial Seed told us that this kohlrabi could grow to monstrous proportions without losing its crisp, mild quality-but they were right. Still, it's best to have a heavy cleaver handy to cut through the thick skin. Or harvest before they become huge. Territorial Seed Company

Growing tip: Timing a cool-weather crop such as kohlrabi can prove difficult in climates where spring proceeds quickly into summer. Test gardener Bill Nunes, who operates a 2-acre market garden in Gustine, California, lives in such a climate. "Winter-sown kohlrabi can bolt quickly here, come what passes for spring in central California. Fortunately, the greens of kohlrabi are delicious," he says. "When I see signs of bolting before the bulbs start to form, I cut and bunch the greens over about a week's time. Just because the bulbs fail to form, it doesn't have to be a complete crop failure."

{Kale}

'Toscano'

With its substantial, deeply textured leaves, this variety of kale is ornamental in the garden as well as delicious and nutritious as a cooking green. In late December, we were still eating the frost-sweetened leaves from our early spring sowing in the test garden. Johnny's Selected Seeds

Growing tip: Although kale is generally a trouble-free crop, cabbageworms can turn its leaves to lace in midseason, says test gardener Jackie Smith, of Belle Plaine, Minnesota. "I hand-pick the cabbageworms from where they are lurking on the undersides of the leaves. If the infestation is more extensive, I pull out the BT [Bacillus thuringiensis] spray once or twice. The plants generally recover nicely by fall," Jackie says. "My best kale tip is to plant it along with ornamentals in the flower border or in containers. It's stunning!"



{Lettuce}

'Blushed Butter Oak' (looseleaf), 'Tom Thumb' (butterhead), 'Anuenue' (Batavian) An assortment of tender lettuces keeps the salad bowl interesting. 'Blushed Butter Oak' (bottom, John Scheepers Kitchen Garden Seeds) adds bronze tones with its wavy leaves; 'Tom Thumb' (center, The Natural Gardening Company) forms perfect single-serving heads; and 'Anuenue' (top, Fedco Seeds) is notable for its heat tolerance.

Growing tip: Test gardener Debbie Leung, of Olympia, Washington, thins her direct-seeded rows of lettuce diligentlywithout wasting a single seedling. "If the lettuce seed is planted somewhat thickly, there are plenty of thinnings to eat," she says. "I thin first to 2 or 3 inches apart. Then when the remaining seedlings get crowded, I thin them to 4 to 6 inches, and maybe repeat again until they can grow to full-sized heads." At every stage, from delicate microgreens to nearly mature heads, the thinnings are deliciously edible.



"If the lettuce seed is planted somewhat thickly, there are plenty of thinnings to eat." -Debbie Leung, Olympia, Washington

{Tomato}

'Snow White'

Our test gardeners rarely agree on tomatoes, but 'Snow White' (opposite) brought unanimous praise. Its pale amber color and tropical fruitiness made it a standout among the 22 tomato varieties we trialed in 2011. Tomato Growers Supply Company

Growing tip: Tomatoes, especially some heirloom varieties, are susceptible to many fungal diseases. John Lewis, our test gardener in Newport, Rhode Island, recommends two techniques that help keep tomato plants healthy. "I mulch to conserve water, but also to cut the spread of disease," he says. "No soil splashes up on the bottom leaves," keeping soilborne disease spores away from foliage. And once a week, John inspects his tomatoes and snips off any spotted or yellowing leaves. Regular cleanup of blighted foliage prevents disease from gaining a foothold.

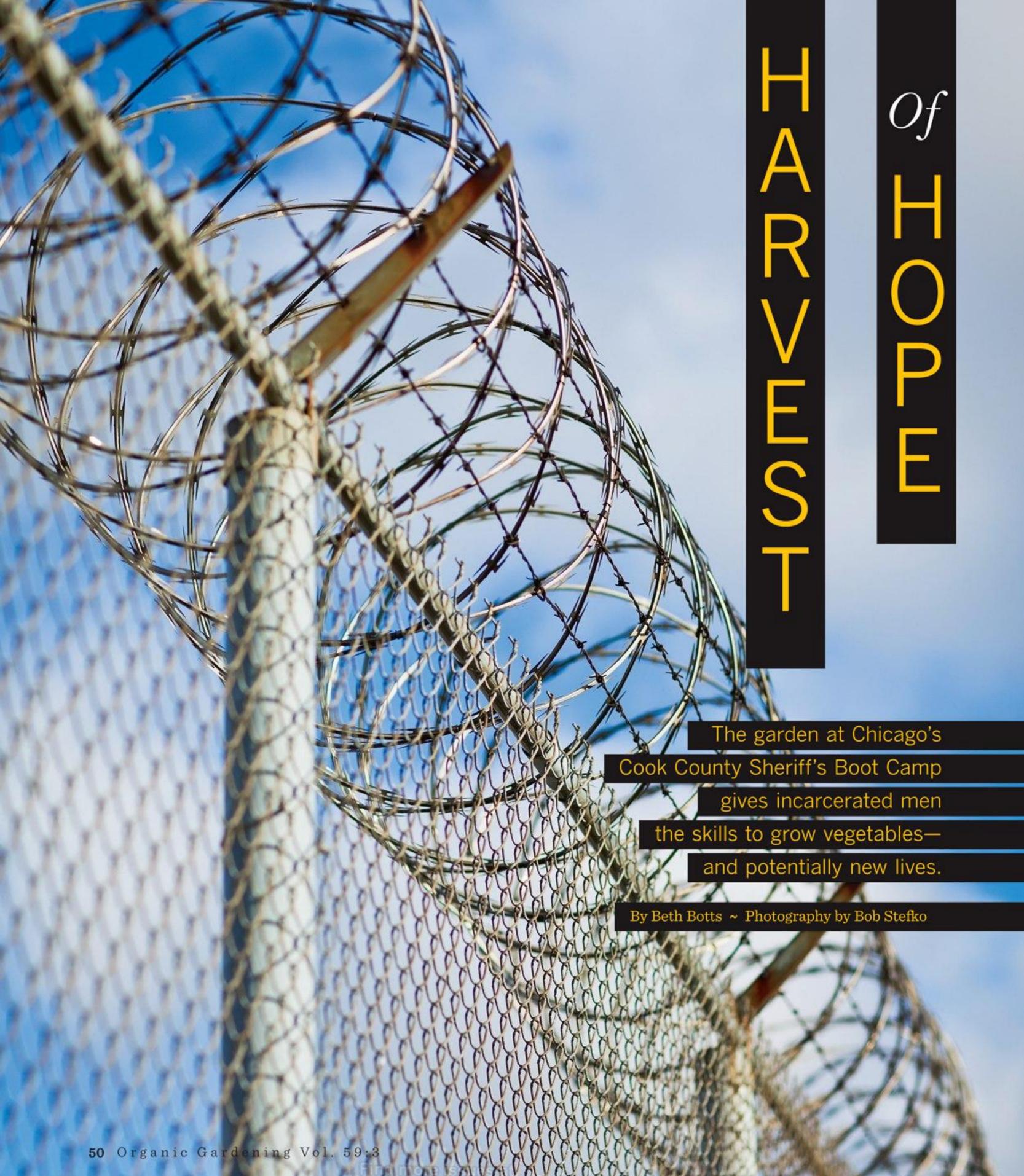
{Snow Pea}

'Oregon Giant'

We found ourselves snacking on these right off the waist-high vines. If any of the harvest makes it into the kitchen, the sweet and crunchy pods (right) are tasty in stir-fries and salads or lightly steamed. Nichols Garden Nursery

Growing tip: Pea plants are floppy and need some support. Kathy Shaw, our test gardener in Neenah, Wisconsin, uses straight 4-foot sticks—usually shrub or tree prunings-to weave simple pea trellises in place. "I love the look of the woven pea trellis, since it reminds me of Colonial gardens and makes me feel in tune with gardeners over the centuries," Kathy says. She sows her peas in a double row 6 inches wide, then pokes the sticks down the center of the row to form the trellis. "I arrange the sticks diagonally in both directions about 3 to 6 inches apart, making overlapping Xs and weaving them back and forth." .







Inmates in orange jumpsuits learn gardening skills under the tutelage of Chris Prochot, crop planting and production manager at the boot camp garden.

EXCEPT FOR THE CURLS OF RAZOR WIRE, IT'S A PLACE OF STRAIGHT LINES: THE TWELVE -FOOT FENCES, THE RANKS AND POSTURE OF YOUNG MEN MARCHING IN PLATOONS ALONG HEAT-BAKED CONCRETE WALKS, THE EAVES OF LOW-ROOFED BARRACKS, THE EDGES OF RAISED BEDS.

But in those beds, zucchini vines sprawl with their usual disrespect for boundaries. New lettuce sprouts in a cheeky green. And the young men here, digging carrots, pulling weeds, harvesting bright leaves of chard, move easily and freely at their tasks.

"It's tranquil in gardens," says 21-yearold Walter Ford. "You have a lot of time to think about things even when you're working." The soft-spoken Ford has grown far from where he began on Chicago's chaotic, gang- and drug-ridden West Side, with no future except a prison term for dealing drugs. Two years later, he has a certificate in urban agriculture, a job, a college ID, and dreams of making a career out of growing things and feeding people.

The garden that helped him grow is managed by the Chicago Botanic Garden at the Cook County Sheriff's Boot Camp, a tough 1-year rehabilitation program for young men who have pleaded guilty to nonviolent offenses.

Many jails and prisons have gardens where inmates work, usually as a privilege earned for good behavior. There's a garden at nearby Cook County Jail, the grim home to 8,000 inmates, where boot-camp inmates return if they fail. But in the 1980s and 1990s, the Gardening Project in San Francisco and the Horticultural Society of New York's GreenHouse project at New York City's Rikers Island were among the first to link jail gardens to job training and employment in urban horticulture.

Most inmates arrive at the boot camp with little hope of any job. They come from neighborhoods where open space is

a vacant lot glittering with broken glass. Their families are often dysfunctional, employment is as scarce as violence is common, and drug dealing is their default. Few finished high school and some can barely read. These young men have done bad things, and some have already done jail time. The boot camp is an attempt to give them another choice before they are entirely lost to prison and the streets.

A young man choosing boot camp instead of jail isn't taking the easy way out. It's 4 months of military-style discipline; hours of daily drill and work, followed by 8 months of probation. But he also gets drug treatment, counseling, help toward earning a general equivalency diploma, vocational training, and job-placement assistance.

Inmates compete for a handful of spots on the garden work detail, but gardening isn't the initial draw; being outdoors offers relief from the pressure of the barracks.

"I thought it would be a nice thing to be outside, a place to get away," says inmate Tywon Smith. "I'm surprised to find myself liking gardening."



Because when a man plants a seed and sees it sprout, cares for a plant, eats food he helped to grow, something can happen. Learning a new idea and then going outdoors and feeling that idea unfold in his own hands can change a spirit.

"They are learning to establish a vision," says Frank Johnson, director of programs for the boot camp. "Many of them have never had a plan. They've acted on impulse or just gone along or carried a gun because they never thought ahead. With the garden, they are learning to take responsibility. When they see something grow, they see a future."

After lifetimes of fast food, many don't know where a carrot comes from, says garden coordinator Joan Hopkins. But

soon, many ask to sample every new root and green they encounter.

In teams of two or three, with drill instructors standing by, the inmates dig in compost, sow seeds, harvest, help research and plan next season's crops, or build hoop houses or new beds.

The transitional job each inmate is required to seek while on probation reinforces the basic lessons of the boot camp: keeping yourself under control, having a goal, staying focused, being polite. For some inmates, it's their first-ever paycheck. And a few earn it in a garden.

On the suburban corporate campus of Kraft Foods, 26 miles north, a swath of lawn has been cut away to make room for pear trees and raised beds of tomatoes,

Swiss chard, and peppers. Working there last summer was 17-year-old Aaron Serrano, who had spent time in juvenile detention and jail before he entered the boot camp after pleading guilty to armed robbery. "I didn't have much going for me, no skills or anything," he says.

He helped create this new garden to raise produce for food pantries with two other boot-camp graduates, earning \$9.50 an hour. They often work with employee volunteers such as Kraft dietitian Lynn O'Grady. "You can tell they really enjoy being out here," O'Grady says of the former inmates. "They're friendly," Serrano says of the volunteers, many of whom, like him a few months ago, have little experience gardening. "I like to help them learn."



Doing Time in the Garden

Jail and prison gardens have a long history. Some notorious prisons began as prison farms, notes James Jiler in his book, Doing Time in the Garden: Life Lessons through Prison Horticulture (New Village Press, 2006). Jiler is the former director of the Horticultural Society of New York's GreenHouse project at Rikers Island. His firsthand account of how the innovative Rikers gardening program teaches skills to prepare inmates for a job and a new life on the outside is interwoven with historical accounts of rose-loving convicts and reform-hating wardens, horrendous crimes and awful punishments. The book includes a primer on developing a prison horticulture program, but it's the unvarnished look at life behind bars that makes the book so absorbing.





Top left: Chris Prochot. Top right: Joan Hopkins. Bottom left: Darius Jones. Bottom right: Frank Johnson.

The former inmates are under the firm but fatherly hand of Rafael Arredondo, a former steelworker. He teaches about good soil and fish emulsion, Japanese beetles and squash bugs, respect and motivation, arriving on time and staying on task.

Like Hopkins, Arredondo works for Windy City Harvest, a program of the botanic garden. They are graduates of its sustainable horticulture and urban agriculture training program. Windy City Harvest helped begin the 1-acre boot-camp garden in 2009, with funding from the county, the botanic garden, and

foundations. Of the 15,000 pounds of produce harvested each year, a quarter goes to charities or farmers' markets and the rest to the mess hall.

On one side of the camp, beyond the razor wire, freight trains rumble; on the other, the roof of Cook County Jail is visible above the weedy trees. The raised vegetable beds, filled with clean soil and compost, were essential, considering the contaminants that might lurk from the site's industrial past. With organic practices and plentiful labor, the garden produces tomatoes, lettuce, okra, carrots, beans, eggplant, corn, and many other crops. And, perhaps, farmers.

Walter Ford, Darius Jones, 20, and Thomas Kelly, 30, are the first former bootcamp inmates to graduate from the Windy City Harvest training, earn certificates, and move into jobs. For 6 months, they took classes, learning about the science and business of organic gardening and farming. Then they spent 3 months working on projects including farmers' markets, community gardens, and composting yards.

Ford comanaged a 75-by-130-foot community garden not far from the street



After lifetimes of eating fast food, many inmates discover how good fresh vegetables like Swiss chard taste through working in the boot-camp garden.

Veg and the City

Some tips for urban vegetable gardening from Walter Ford and Darius Jones:

Allow enough room. "As the plants get big, the roots expand," Jones says. It's not just a matter of horizontal spacing; he recommends a good foot of soil depth. To grow vegetables in containers, he suggests a 5-gallon bucket.

Don't rush. Harsh winter climates can doom warm-weather crops such as tomatoes and peppers that are planted too early, says Ford. "Pay attention to frost dates," he says. In Chicago, that means waiting until mid-May or even early June.

Make sure you have sun. In the city, looming buildings and trees may block the 8 hours a day of light that vegetables need, Jones says. If you grow vegetables in containers, you can move them into the sun.

corner where he used to sell drugs. The members of his former gang didn't bother him. "They know that's not what I'm into now," he says. Ford enjoyed interacting with the community gardeners who had growing space within the garden's wrought iron fence and helping area neighbors who stopped by for advice.

He lives with his grandparents and has expanded their backyard garden. But now his sights are wider than the neighborhood. He is enrolled in community college and hopes to become an advocate for urban agriculture. "I want to be at the forefront,"

he says. And he's working full-time at a local foods distribution company.

Classmate Jones had spent 15 months in jail before a judge gave him a chance at the boot camp after an arrest for carjacking. Now he's enrolled in community college and working for Windy City Harvest. Kelly works for an aquaponics firm.

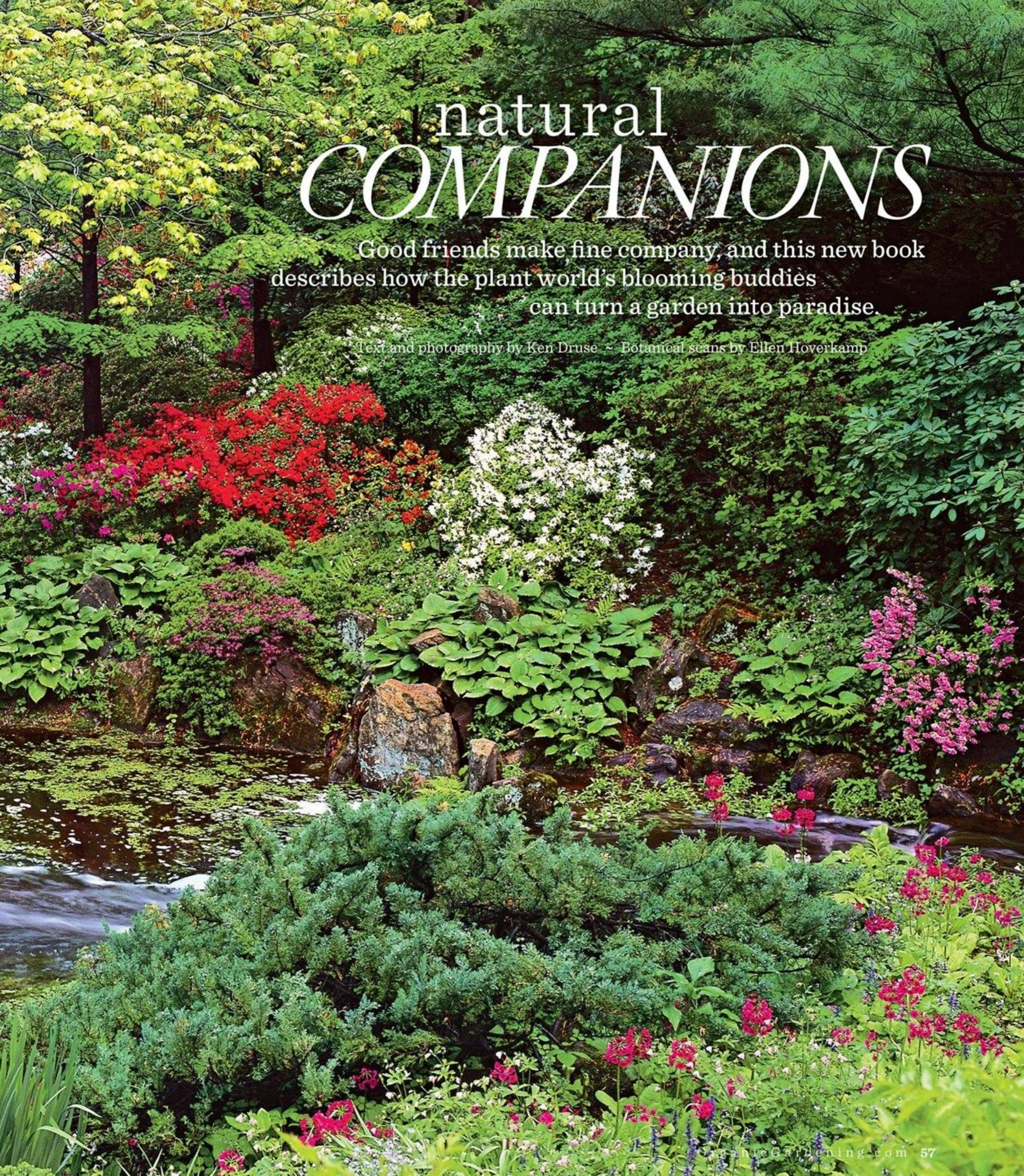
Yet for all the buzz over urban agriculture, jobs are scarce. Corrections experts also warn against imagining that the experience of a garden can, by itself, save anyone. About three-quarters of inmates successfully complete the 1-year boot camp

program, and up to 5 years later 65 percent have not been convicted of another felony, according to Johnson. That compares to the 45 percent of former prisoners nationwide and 51 percent in Illinois who are re-arrested within 3 years of leaving prison. The retired Marine colonel says, "We have had great success with those who participate in this garden program."

There are no statistics on how working in a garden affects inmates' chances of changing their lives. Angela Mason, who oversees both the boot-camp garden and Windy City Harvest as director of community gardening for the botanic garden, says the ones who succeed are "the guys who are just tired of looking over their shoulder. They're done with that. They don't want to look back."

"I think this is a population with a lot to offer, and I think they're overlooked," she says. "A majority of the young men we work with in the boot camp are really incredible. They just need some guidance, and a sense of community and a feeling of being part of something." Like a garden. •





GARDEN ART TAKES MANY FORMS

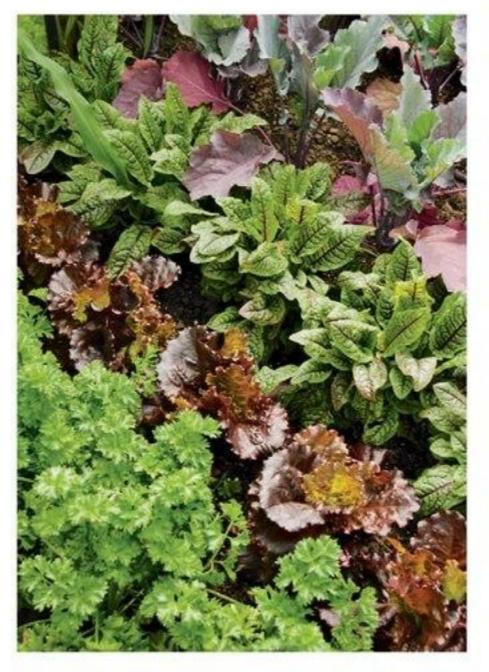
and in his latest book, Natural Companions, Ken Druse shows us the creativity behind composing a garden picture in the physical garden, but also in capturing a pictorial representation of plants. Produced in partnership with photographer Ellen Hoverkamp,

the text is vintage Druse: an engaging blend of humor (the punning titles are rib-ticklers), garden history, botanical knowledge, and practical advice based on the experience of creating his garden in northwest New Jersey as well as what he's gleaned from gardens around the world.

Describing the duo's work behind this generously inclusive gallery of plantsmanship, Druse writes: "I made lists of themes and subjects such as plant families, palettes, and other reasons to bring plants together. I grew many of the plants for our project in my garden, and Ellen went to her gardening friends, lists in hand, for more. We called in plants from friends in the Southeast and Southwest, on the West Coast, and at other locales around the country to be sure to touch on as many regions as possible." Hoverkamp's lens is not attached to a camera but is an oversize, 12-by-17-inch flatbed scanner. As the plants were collected, she'd take them back to her studio and set to work. The only light came from the scanner as it moved slowly across the glass bed on which she carefully arranged the foliage, blooms, stems, and seedpods to compose each frame, suspending some

> from wire frames above the scanner bed to avoid crushing them. The results have an intriguing depth and luminosity.

> The images, although highly graphic in composition, reflect how the plants might be found in nature. So they instruct as well as inspire. As Druse explains, "...we tried to present a hierarchy as it might appear in a planting: from the low groundcover in the foreground, medium-size samples in the middle, and finally the tallest constituents at the top. The results in this book are slices of planting schemes, as if you could isolate a pie wedge from a bed or border to create an exhibition with samples plucked from the garden." Adds Hoverkamp: "I'm in awe of what gardeners do [and] I've found a way to make a souvenir, a lasting memory of how my friends nurture nature. I want to show other people what gardeners know about the beauty of plants." -Ethne Clarke



Magnificent Obsession

There may be no more satisfying thing than to pluck a fruit or vegetable from your own garden and sample it fresh off the vine. Talk about devotion. Vegetable gardening might just be the most challenging outdoor version of our pastime, and that goes double if you hope to do it organically and sustainably, as we all do.

It starts with soil. You can dig or double dig, turning over the soil in two layers and adding organic matter. Or you can make raised beds in which you bring in your enriched soil and fill bottomless wooden boxes set on the ground with sides that are from ten to thirty inches high. But the most modern approach, no-till, preserves the inherent structure of the soil by not

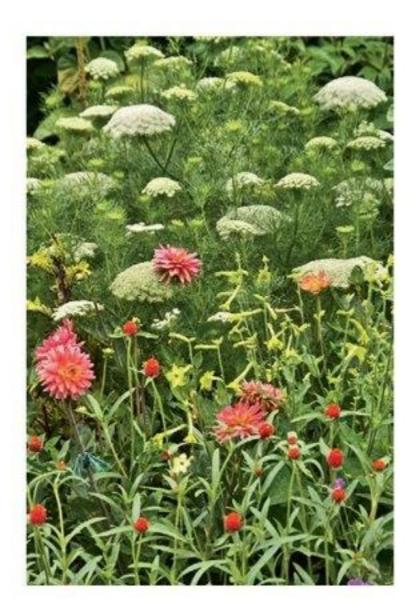
disturbing it. Each season, compost is added to the surface as plants are plugged into the earth, then the bed is mulched. In time, the compost incorporates through the same processes that built the soil through the years. My garden is shady. I have few places where there is enough sunlight to grow tomatoes, which I allow to sprawl over makeshift supports up on the driveway. I grow winter squash on the southern edge of large plastic, faux terracotta pots, or a half whiskey barrel, and not alone. I plant upright ornamentals like Colocasia (elephant ears), and let the squash vines sprawl down over the container's edge. My growing medium is soilless: two parts coir, one part compost, and one part

perlite. Vegetable plants, and especially those in containers, are "gross-feeders," so they get frequent doses of a balanced, organic liquid fertilizer like a kelp and fish emulsion.

Some of the challenges of growing food are avoided by using containers. I can move them if need be for more sunlight. I can pick off bugs if they appear. Having edibles in several places helps keep the critters at bay. Then there are the things you cannot control, like the weather. One year, rain ruins your crops. The next, drought takes its toll.

When the weather forecaster says, "another beautiful day without a cloud in the sky," I want to scream.





Fresh from the Garden

Summer garden flowers, especially annuals from seed, beg to be cut for the house. There are ways to make flowers last as long as possible. Cut early in the morning when the blossoms are full of moisture and the air is cool. Some flowers cut in bud will open; others will not. Roses, irises, gladiolas, and daffodils can be cut in bud (give daffs their own vase; they shorten the lives of other flowers). Lilacs should be cut when half of the buds have opened. Marigolds, delphiniums, and dianthus should be cut when they are completely open. Try to collect zinnias when the ray florets (the sterile flowers around the outside) are unfurled, but the tiny fertile ray florets (at the center of the flower) are just beginning to bloom.

Carry a bucket of water, and a very sharp knife. Immediately plunge the cut stems in deep water. Bring the flowers into a cool place. The stems may be left submerged for hours. You should always recut the stems before you use them and, if possible, underwater. Air bubbles can get into the sodastraw-like tubes within the stems and seal them-trapping some water in the stem, but also keeping more water out. A few exceptions are plants like poppies, which have sap in their stems. Those plants should be recut, and the tip of the stem held over a flame until it blackens. Woody plants like shrubs should have their ends slit a few times about two inches



up the stem lengthwise, and/or have the bark scraped from the bottom few inches to expose the most area to water.

Store-bought packets of preservative work, or you can make your own. Mix one part naturally sweetened citric soda like 7Up to three parts water for a bacteriadeterring, nutritional solution. Other home remedies also have some value. A penny in the water may help reduce fungus. Aspirin is acidic and prevents

bacteria growth just like the citric acid, as does a quarter teaspoon of bleach per quart of water. Flowers will last longest if kept cool-even in cold storage, down to 38 degrees F. Keep flowers in the house out of direct sun and do not put arrangements near fruit, which gives off ethylene gas, shortening their life.

Most important: recut the stems and change the water every day. I use warm water, except for bulbs.



One Good Fern Deserves Another

We know that foliage is often more important in a garden vista than blooms are. Flowers are fleeting, but foliage lasts all season long or longer, in the case of the needle and broadleaf evergreens. There are evergreen ferns, as well, but most of the choices for our gardens die to the ground in winter and present their coiled, bishop's crook crosiers again in spring.

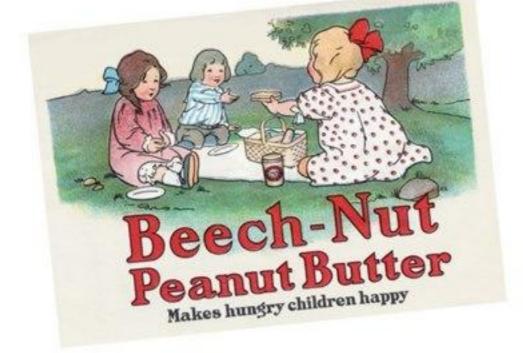
Most ferns come from the shaded, moist woodland areas of the world, but there are drought-tolerant ferns, desert species, and ones that grow in sunny rock crevices (Cheilanthes spp., for example). Hayscented fern (Dennstaedtia punctilobula) also likes sun and can often be found growing in open areas like somewhat dry meadows with sweet fern (Comptonia peregrina), a

creeping subshrub, and little bluestem grass (Schizachyrium scoparium). In shady spots, we're happy to have plants with large solid leaves that evolved to gather as much light as possible. Ferns, on the other hand, unfold their feathery fronds to absorb light and provide us with unmatched texture in these protected spots. There are some 12,000 fern species in the world, and these are among the oldest plants on Earth. There are ferns with colorful fronds, like the Japanese painted fern (Athyrium niponicum 'Pictum' and other varieties). Some of the hardy ferns for gardens are evergreen; for example, the Polystichum spp. like Christmas fern. Other useful garden ferns are Adiantum pedatum (northern maidenhair fern), Athyrium filix-femina (lady fern), Dryopteris erythrosora (autumn fern), Onoclea sensibilis (sensitive fern), Osmunda cinnamomea (cinnamon fern), O. claytoniana (interrupted fern), O. regalis (royal fern), and Thelypteris noveboracensis (New York fern). Some fern allies to grow alongside these old-timers include plants that will provide contrast to their feathery foliage or produce flowers that punctuate the plantings. Worthwhile examples include Rodgersia spp., Trollius spp., Brunnera macrophylla varieties, Omphalodes cappadocica, hosta varieties, Carex spp., Milium effusium 'Aureum', Primula sieboldii, Epimedium varieties, and shade-tolerant spring-flowering bulbs. As delicate as some ferns appear, most are fairly sturdy, and a few might even become an aggressive problem. The North American species Matteuccia struthiopteris (ostrich fern) has runners-just below the soil surface—that connect plant to plant. Although slow to establish like many ferns, once it gets going, ostrich fern will colonize as much territory as it can, and even choke out weeds. You may want such a species for a difficult site that is too shady for lawn yet still calls out for a blanketing cover, but be wary (or at least knowledgeable) about what you wish for. .

Excerpted from Natural Companions: The Garden Lover's Guide to Plant Combinations, by Ken Druse, botanical scans by Ellen Hoverkamp. For more information, see Find It Here on page 101.







Above: A page from an early 20thcentury promotional booklet promises lunchtime bliss.



Maybe it's just a southern thang, but I can't pass up a roadside vendor of boiled peanuts. And all my life I have enjoyed putting a healthy handful of unsalted peanuts in my colas. Call it a country boy's cocktail: a perfect pick-me-up combo of flavored fizzy sugar water and protein-packed peanuts.

Instead of being produced on trees, bushes, or vines, the way a sane person would expect, peanuts develop underground. Unlike true nuts, peanuts (Arachis bypogaea, also known as pinders, goober peas, ground peas, and ground nuts) are unusual members of the legume family, with the same pea- and beanlike ability to "fix" nitrogen from the air on root nodules (great for adding back to the garden soil or compost). Sturdy "pegs" snake out of the yellow flowers and into the soil, where the rough, seed-filled pods are formed (bypogaea means "under the earth").

Peanut seeds are among the world's wonders for healthful goodness. Peanuts contain more than 75 percent good unsaturated fat and more antioxidants than nearly any other more highly touted fruit or vegetable, and-vegetarians and vegans, rejoice!—higher amounts of vegetable protein than any true nut.

Although more than 3 million Americans are allergic to peanuts, the rest of us eat a lot of them. Forget the peanut oil, the snacks, and flavorful ingredients in our

favorite dishes; last year, Americans spent almost \$800 million on peanut butter alone. Even the hulls have value, finding use in products that range from wallboard to cat litter, fireplace logs, cosmetics, mulch, and cattle feed.

A bit of history: From their origins in ancient Peru, peanuts were spread by Portuguese traders to Africa, India, and China, where they quickly became staples before making their way to North America from Africa. Still, they took a couple of centuries to catch on as a food source in the United States.

In 1860, yearly peanut production in the United States amounted to roughly 150,000 bushels. During lean Civil War times, boiled peanuts, called goober peas, were used as an emergency ration by grateful soldiers. By 1895, when 8 million bushels were grown, mechanized planting and harvesting made peanuts easier to produce, and they began showing up as snack food in pubs, sports stadiums, circuses, and other "peanut galleries."

George Washington Carver, the celebrated researcher of Alabama's Tuskegee Institute, championed peanuts in the early 20th century as an alternative crop for land depleted by cotton cultivation. He promoted more than 300 uses for the soil-improving legume, including industrial products, foods, and cosmetics.

Wartime shortages of vegetable oil and the growing popularity of roasted peanuts and peanut candies further increased demand for peanuts, and Elvis Presley's grilled peanut-butter-and-banana sandwiches clinched their place in popular culture. Nowadays, more peanuts are eaten in the United States than walnuts, almonds, and hazelnuts combined.

Navigating a Difficult Market

American farmers produce nearly all the peanuts we eat in the United States. Patrick Archer, president of the American Peanut Council, says there isn't a lot of foreign competition in our market. Though India and China together account for more than half of the world's production, about half of it is processed for cooking oil. Around 87 percent of U.S.-grown peanuts are processed for food, Archer says, with the remainder (usually peanuts of inferior quality) turned into peanut oil.

But hold on to your bread slices, peanut lovers. Organic peanut products may be scarce for the foreseeable future. Because of bad harvests in 2011 and difficulties in processing, the price for the raw beans is expected to go sky high-nearly triple what it was just a year ago-with more supply shortages predicted.

Malcolm Broome, executive director of the Mississippi Peanut Growers Association, explains that when the USDA dropped its strictly allotted acreage quotas, a lot of small farmers went out of business. Larger growers have taken up the slack, but few of them grow organically, because of the extra labor involved in

Spreadable Nutrition

Homemade peanut butter is almost too easy: Puree roasted peanuts and a pinch of salt until reasonably smooth. If you like, add a little honey or other natural sweetener. To make it even creamier, blend in a drizzle of peanut or olive oil. Store in the fridge.



Clockwise from
above: Relics of past
harvests at a closed
Lee County, Texas,
processing plant.
• The 2011 peanut
crop was reduced
by drought. • Susan
Wedel's personalized
tag. • Digging peanuts.







Growing Peanuts at Home

Every garden should have peanuts as a reminder of the connection between good food and good soil. Although peanuts are traditionally a southern crop, they can be grown anywhere the growing season is longer than 4 months.

To get started, shell raw organic peanuts, if they aren't shelled already, but leave the papery skins intact. After the last frost in spring, and when the soil has warmed, sow these

seeds about 2 inches deep. In my South Carolina garden, I plant them between flowers, where spacing isn't important, pushing the nuts into loose soil wherever there's a gap. I let them spread as a tough, attractive groundcover under roses and summer bulbs or allow them to trail from a container.

If your goal is to harvest, sow seeds in a sunny plot of well-drained soil amended with compost or seaweed fertilizer.

Space the seeds about 6 inches apart in rows 2 feet apart. Each plant will make about 40 nuts.

Harvest in fall, about the time of frost. Dig and test; if the inside of the hull is pinkish or dark, the nuts are mature. Lift the plants with a fork, shake dirt from the roots, and leave them outdoors to dry for a few days. Then pull off the peanuts, which are ready to roast, boil, or grind into butter. -Jenks Farmer



keeping equipment clean and segregating organic products from nonorganic products. Small-scale farmers are having a hard time competing, even with higher prices for their product.

Jimmie Shearer, president of Sunland, a New Mexico-based shelling and marketing firm handling organic peanuts, emphasizes that not only was overall peanut production down in 2011, but it doesn't look good in the short run for organic peanuts. "Southwestern farmers are being pushed to the limit with heat, drought, water shortages, and the lure of higher prices for cotton and other traditional crops," says Shearer. "We can't get the organics we want. Not enough is available, even from overseas."

Jimmy Wedel, from Muleshoe, Texas, agrees, saying that his farm is in a situation where water is limited, so he has to choose his crops carefully. "All my peanuts are organic, but because of the serious drought, and higher prices for other organic and conventional crops, I will have to reduce my peanut planting in 2012."

This is a real problem, Shearer points out, noting the 3-year process for certifying fields as organic. "Even if they started again now, it would take at least 3 years to get recertified as organic . . . so nothing is going to change in the foreseeable future."

Trouble on the Horizon

To compound the dilemma, it is difficult to have organic peanuts certified for food on a large scale without possible contamination from shelling and other processing facilities. Jimmy Hayes, owner of Healthy Hollow farm near Savannah, Georgia, says that though researchers are finding ways to make light tilling and cover crops more efficient for organic growers, the biggest hurdle to growing food-grade organic peanuts profitably in the Southeast is the lack of a certified-organic sheller. Without that, he explains, he can't claim his crop is certified organic; he can claim only that it is organically grown. "Actually, I'm making more profit selling my excess to an organic dairy as cattle feed," Hayes says.

The USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service estimates that at current global levels of consumption, the amount of peanut oil used

is 99 percent of the amount produced. But because food oils are increasingly being diverted to industrial and bio-energy uses, there is a real concern that the supply of all food-grade vegetable oils, including corn and peanut, will be sharply reduced in just a few years.

Research is being blindsided, as well. The National Peanut Research Laboratory in Dawson, Georgia, has experienced cuts in federal funding, and as a result it is seeing a reduction in research positions and a significant portion of its work halted.

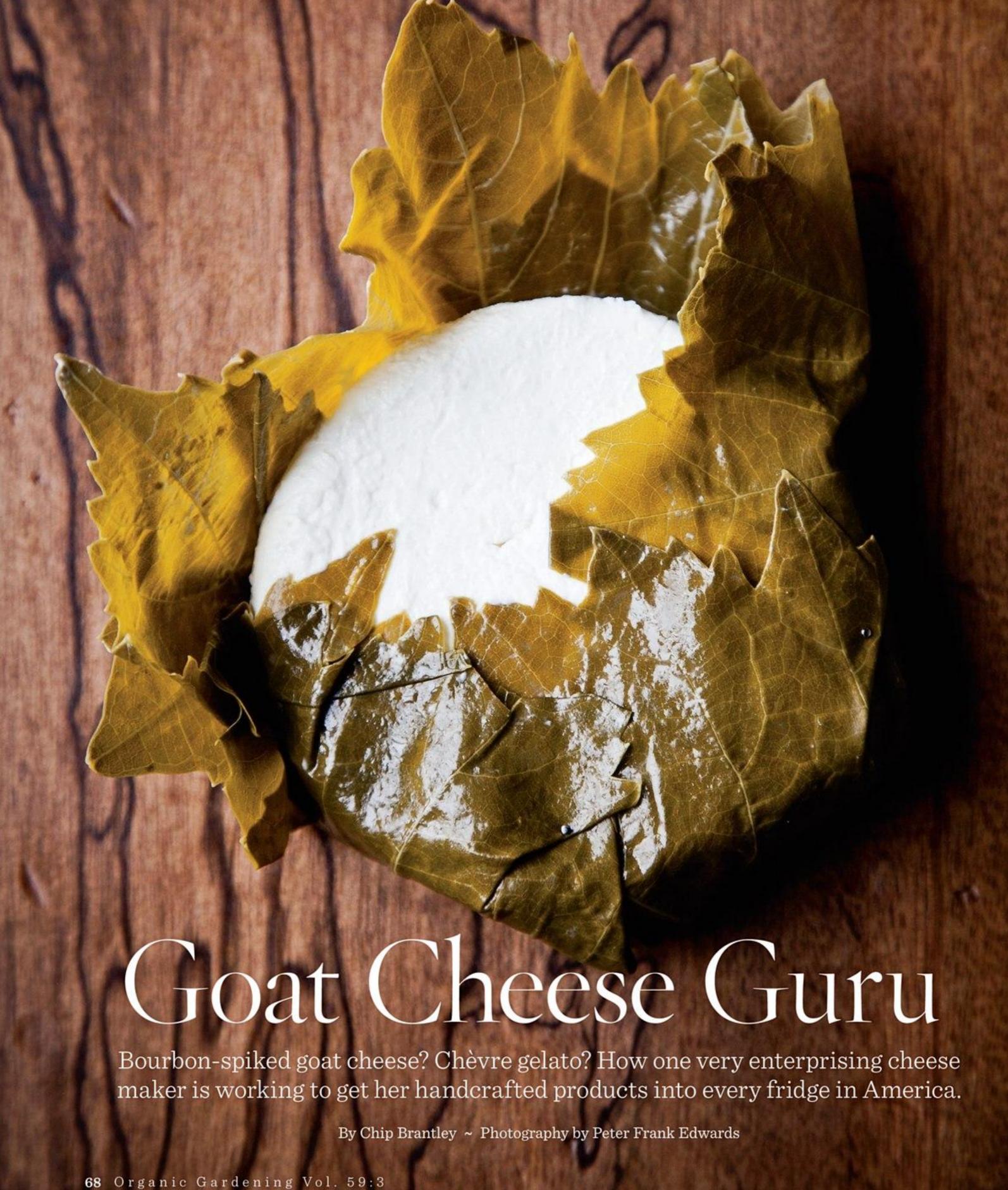
However, the International Peanut Genome Initiative, a collaborative effort looking for improved quality, production, nutrition, and pest and disease resistance, is currently studying the peanut genome structure-the arrangement of genetic information in peanut cells. And, as anyone following agricultural-production issues knows, genomic research often leads to genetic engineering.

All this kinda makes you want to stock up, or try growing your own, eh? Luckily, growing peanuts is fun and easy anywhere you have at least 4 months (or better, 5) of warm weather. Peanuts put us in touch with our agricultural roots while helping to stretch a food budget like nothing else on-or under-the earth.

Visit national peanutboard.org to read fun facts about peanuts. For more information, see Find It Here on page 101.

Above: In 1915, Beech-Nut was the largest maker of peanut butter in the United States. It was marketed as a premium brand.

Opposite, clockwise from top: Jimmy and Susan Wedel with their just-dug crop. A vintage peanut sheller. • After peanuts are dug, they are left to dry briefly in the field.



Inside a former cotton warehouse in rural north-central Alabama, Tasia Malakasis is dreaming again.

The space might hold a café in one corner, she says, or a demo kitchen for cooking classes or a small specialty foods market-maybe even all three. Outside, the torn-up parking lot could become a crushed-stone courtyard with outdoor seating and a regular open-air market, all of it ringed with orchards. And right in the middle of the warehouse, she says, tracing a square into the air of the 16,000-square-foot space, "I want to put a giant glass box. That way, everyone can walk around it and see how the goat cheese is made."

The goat cheese in question is made by Belle Chevre, the creamery that Malakasis owns and that she envisions relocating from its current cramped quarters in Elkmont, Alabama, to this moldering relic of the old South. It's all part of her plan to take her small-batch, hand-crafted cheeses from foodie splurge to everyday luxury. To do for goat cheese, in other words, what Ben & Jerry's did for upscale ice cream: Make it a fun, accessible treat that also, despite widespread success, continues to embody the principles of its founders.

"The thing about artisan cheese is that outside of hard-core foodies, not a lot of people know the names of any specialty brands," she says. "But I'm focused on taking this high-end item mainstream."

Focus is not something that Malakasis lacks. A former software marketing executive who wanted to marry her professional skills with her passion for good food, Malakasis bought Belle Chevre in 2007. After an extended cheese-making apprenticeship with then-owner Liz Parnell, Malakasis immediately set to work reimagining the 20-year-old brand, which was esteemed within cheese circles for its creamy, fresh, French-style goat cheeses but largely unknown to anyone else.

"I keep asking myself two questions: 'What can I do with goat cheese that no one else is doing?' and 'What would be fun?" she says. "If it's fun and if I think people will buy it, then I'll try it."

One of her first innovations was to introduce a line of breakfast spreads flavored with coffee, cinnamon, figs, and honey. She also created several variations on the traditional goat-cheese crottin or disc, including the Southern Belle (coated in bourbon-soaked pecans, sugar, and mint) and the Greek Kiss (wrapped in

brined grape leaves). Lemon, chocolate, and pumpkin goat-cheese cheesecakes followed. Most recently, she's been testing goat's-milk gelato and yogurt, and she's trying to develop a line of handmade snack packs (think upscale Lunchables).

Inevitably, some ideas don't pan out. A plan to reconfigure an old ice-cream truck into a roadtripping goat-cheese-mobile stalled when the price on eBay hit five digits. No one liked a Moroccan-inspired cheese spread (honey, curry, and cranberries) that Malakasis loved, and an attempt to crowd-fund \$100,000 for a new creamery fell short.

But cheese makers, of all people, know how to accept and learn from failure. Making goat cheese the way Malakasis does, on a small scale and in a nonfactory environment, can be a precarious enterprise. The process itself, which differs slightly from cheese to cheese and cheese maker to cheese maker, is simple





Opposite: Greek Kiss goat cheese. Left: Tasia Malakasis rolls fresh goat cheese logs in dried oregano that her stepmother sends her from Greece. "It's a simple trick to liven up the chèvre," she says.

Above: The result.













enough—when it works. First, a starter culture is introduced to pasteurized milk to help it ripen. Next, rennet is added to coagulate the milk into curds, a process that can take a full day. The curd is then scooped or drained into cheesecloth bags, which sit for another day or so until the whey has drained off. What's left in the bags is cheese, and after seasoning it, Belle Chevre's crew of cheese makers shape each piece by hand before packaging it. But unseen bacterial forces make the outcome always uncertain, and this uncertainty adds a little risk to the work.

For Malakasis, that's part of what gives cheese making its pleasure. And on the business end, those risks are essential to building Belle Chevre into the company she wants it to be.

The trick is getting people to differentiate Belle Chevre from all the other goat-cheese brands available. "I've got only 1.4 seconds to persuade people in the store to pick up my cheese, and no one in Connecticut knows that it was handmade and hand-packed by eight women in north Alabama, talking, having fun together, and listening to loud music. So my job is to figure out how I let people know how much we love doing this."

And that brings us back to the glass box.

The idea of converting an old cotton warehouse into a stateof-the-art creamery is part of Malakasis's plan to make Belle Chevre special. The lease on the company's longtime headquarters is due to expire, so Malakasis will soon have to find (and build) a new home.

She needs it to be within a reasonable commute for her employees and to be flexible enough to expand if her venture in, say, chèvre cheesecake really takes off. But one of the main purposes of Belle Chevre's new home will be to draw crowds in to hear (and be a part of) the Belle Chevre story.

"People want to come see us right now," she says, "and I have to turn them away. There's just no room."

The glass box would give people room to come and see the cheese-making process, and the reinvented cotton warehouse would give people a reason to linger and return.

Malakasis also likes that the place is surrounded by pasture. Belle Chevre has no goats of its own (nor a place to milk them), so Malakasis sources fresh milk from a couple of dairies in southern Tennessee and North Carolina. But she is also considering starting a small herd of her own once Belle Chevre has settled into its new home. The goats will provide a little milk and add the right air of authenticity. She has even toyed with an idea she calls Kids for Kids. The program would pair up schoolchildren with goats, possibly even involve a cheese made from community-sourced milk and help reconnect people to their food supply.

"I'm not trying to change the world with goat cheese," says Malakasis. "But we're more than just in the food business; we're also in the business of making people happy. We can help support this community in a meaningful way by creating quality, real food." She takes a last, long look around the warehouse. "You know, I've got big dreams for this little creamery." .

For more information, see Find It Here on page 101.

Spring Pea Soup with Pesto Goat-Cheese Tartines

Tartine is simply the French word for an open-face sandwich. Be careful when pureeing the hot soup-if you fill the blender more than half full, it can spatter and burn you. Or use a hand-held immersion blender, which lets you puree the soup in the pot.

For pesto:

2 large garlic cloves, roughly chopped

1/2 cup toasted pine nuts

1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese (about 11/2 ounces)

4 cups packed fresh basil leaves, washed well

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1/4 cup plus 3 tablespoons extravirgin olive oil

For soup:

13/4 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth

1 small onion, finely chopped

1 medium carrot, thinly sliced

1 medium stalk of celery, thinly sliced

1/2 teaspoon salt, plus extra to season

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 pound frozen peas (33/4 cups)

For tartines:

6 slices of fresh baguette 3 ounces soft, fresh goat cheese

To make pesto: Pulse garlic in a food processor until finely chopped, then add nuts, cheese, a large handful of basil, and pepper and process until chopped. Add remaining basil one handful at a time, pulsing after each addition, until finely chopped. With motor running, add oil and blend until incorporated. Reserve 5 tablespoons of pesto for the soup and tartines. The remaining pesto can be stored, covered with a thin layer of olive oil, in the refrigerator for up to a week.



To make soup: In a medium saucepan, bring chicken broth and 2 cups water to a simmer. Add onion, carrot, celery, salt, and pepper and simmer, covered, until vegetables are tender, about 6 minutes. Add peas and simmer, uncovered, until peas are bright green and tender, about 3 minutes. Stir in 4 tablespoons of the pesto, then puree soup in two batches in a blender until smooth. Season to taste with salt.

To make tartines: Spread goat cheese on baguette slices, top with a dollop of the remaining 1 tablespoon of pesto, and serve with the soup.

Makes 6 servings

Opposite: Malakasis wraps her Greek Kiss goat cheese in brined grape leaves. Above: Baguette topped with goat cheese and pesto accompanies fresh pea soup.

"I'm not trying to change the world with goat cheese," says Malakasis. "But we're more than just in the food business."

Rhubarb Galette with Chèvre Cream

A galette is a rustic, free-form tart. Try the tangy goat-cheese topping instead of whipped cream the next time you make strawberry shortcake.

For crust:

11/4 cups all-purpose flour, plus extra to roll out dough 1 tablespoon sugar 1/4 teaspoon salt 7 tablespoons chilled unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch cubes 2 tablespoons (or more) ice water

For filling and topping:

1 pound trimmed rhubarb, cut into ½-inch pieces 1/4 cup plus 5 tablespoons sugar, divided 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon 2 tablespoons (1/4 stick) unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch cubes 1 large egg yolk, beaten to blend 8 ounces soft, fresh goat cheese 1/4 cup heavy whipping cream

To make crust: Pulse flour, sugar, and salt in a food processor to blend. Add butter and pulse until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add 2 tablespoons ice water and pulse until dough clumps together, adding more ice water by teaspoonfuls if dough is dry. Gather dough into ball and flatten into disk. Wrap in plastic and chill at least 2 hours.

To make filling: Combine rhubarb, 1/4 cup sugar, and cinnamon in medium bowl. Let stand at least 30 minutes and up to 1 hour.

Meanwhile, position rack in center of oven and preheat to 350°F. Remove dough from refrigerator and let soften 10 minutes at room temperature.

Place large sheet of parchment paper on work surface and sprinkle with flour. Roll out dough on parchment to 12-inch round. Transfer parchment with dough to large rimmed baking sheet. Spread rhubarb on dough, leaving 1-inch border at edge. Gently fold dough border over outer edge of rhubarb topping, pleating as needed.

Sprinkle 2 tablespoons sugar over rhubarb. Dot rhubarb with butter cubes. Brush edge of dough with beaten egg yolk. Sprinkle border with 1 tablespoon sugar.

Bake until rhubarb is tender and juices bubble, about 1 hour. Cool at least 30 minutes.

To make topping: In a small bowl, beat together goat cheese, heavy cream, and remaining 2 tablespoons sugar until smooth and creamy.

Cut galette into wedges. Serve warm or at room temperature with goat cheese cream.

Makes 4-8 servings





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Opposite and left: Goat cheese makes a creamy topping for a rustic rhubarb tart, and is the base for a tangy herb dressing on shrimp salad.

Shrimp Salad with Green Onion and Goat Cheese Dressing

This creamy dressing would also be delicious on poached chicken breasts or salmon. Make sure to zest the lemon before juicing it.

For dressing:

1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil 1/2 cup crumbled soft mild goat cheese

1/4 cup red wine vinegar 2 teaspoons lemon zest Juice of 1/2 lemon

2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

2 tablespoons chopped fresh green onions Salt and pepper to taste

For salad:

1 pound large shrimp (18-24 count) 8 ounces fresh arugula Lemon slices to garnish (optional)

To make dressing: In a medium bowl, whisk together all of the dressing ingredients until well combined. Set aside.

To make salad: Fill a large bowl halfway with cold water and add several ice cubes; set aside. Fill a large stockpot three-quarters full of salted water and bring to a boil. Add the shrimp and boil for 3 minutes, or until bright pink. Drain and immediately plunge shrimp into the ice water for a few minutes, to stop the cooking process. Drain and cut shrimp into 1/2-inch pieces. Add shrimp to dressing and stir to coat.

Line a large, shallow salad bowl or serving plate with arugula and top with shrimp. Garnish with lemon slices if desired.

Makes 6 servings

Growing for Compost

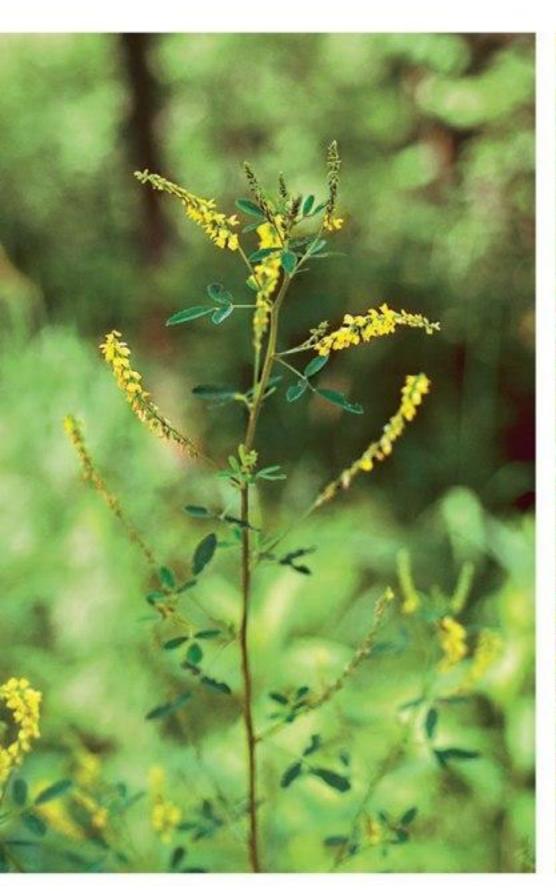
These nutrient-laden crops are food for the compost pile.

ultivating crops specifically for composting is a major tenet of intensive gardening methods like biodynamic and biointensive gardening. Practitioners of these approaches devote as much as 60 percent of their plots to plants destined for the compost pile. But these growing methods may be too, well, intensive for many home gardeners. There are plants you can grow with the compost pile in mind, though, that will benefit the pile, the garden, and in some cases your table.

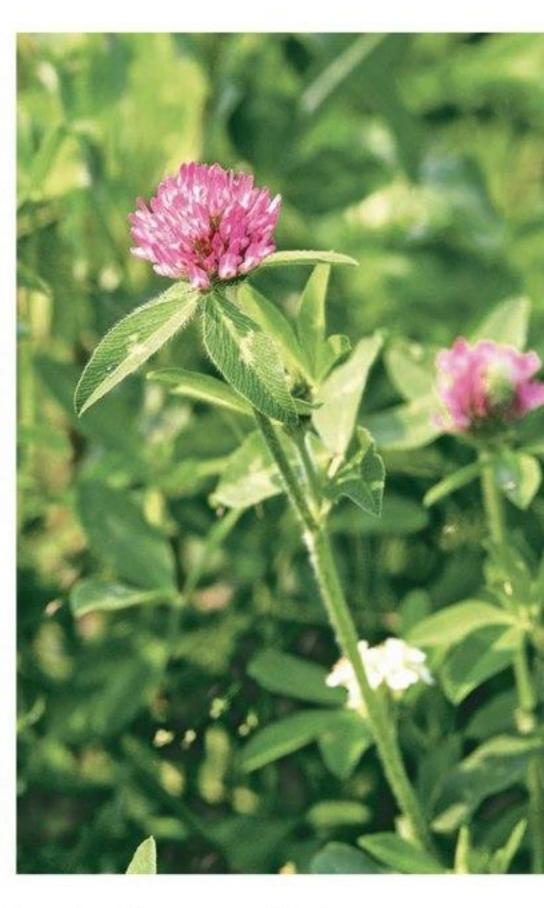
One approach is to grow a perennial legume, such as red clover or alfalfa, around the edges of the garden or between rows, says Marianne Sarrantonio, Ph.D., a professor of sustainable agriculture at the University of Maine at Orono. Cut back the foliage and add to the compost pile when it becomes hard to wade

through or is getting bothersome in general. With extensive root systems that "fix" nitrogen (capture nitrogen from the air and stockpile it in root nodules), these legumes can help balance the carbon-to-nitrogen ratio in the compost pile as well as encourage beneficial soil microbes. It's easy to harvest the clover or alfalfa with a lawn mower but best if done by hand or with a sickle. "It's extra work, but you're getting lots of benefit both in place and then on the compost pile," Sarrantonio says.

Sarrantonio also recommends growing the biennial yellow sweet clover in a small plot adjacent to your garden beds. Another nitrogen-fixing legume, sweet clover has roots that can extend 3 feet below ground and leafy tops that reach up to 6 feet tall in good soil. Cut the plants back after they grow a couple of feet and put the nitrogen-rich foliage on the compost pile. Planted in







Above, left to right: Yellow sweet clover, alfalfa, and red clover are three nonnative legumes that provide plenty of nutritious topgrowth for the compost pile. The clovers can become weedy in some regions; don't plant them where they might escape from cultivation into the wild, and don't let them go to seed.



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spring, yellow sweet clover will last through the winter and into the following summer, with time for two or three harvests for the compost pile. "I wouldn't put this in the garden pathways, though, because it grows a little too tall and fast, and could block the sun from the garden," she says.

In beds that would otherwise be bare through the winter, try planting a winter annual, such as cereal rye, as a cover crop after harvest. The cereal rye will protect the soil over the cold season, and its tremendous root system will grab nutrients that remain in the soil after the growing season. Before planting the following spring, harvest the aboveground, carbon-rich parts of the rye for the compost pile, leaving the nutrient-laden root system in your beds. "Normally I would recommend just tilling a winter cover crop down," Sarrantonio says, "but don't turn a grass like cereal rye under,

because it will tie up some nitrogen, won't decompose quickly, and will be in the way of early crops."

Another doubly beneficial group of winter annuals are the forage brassicas, including kale and daikon, sometimes called forage radish. When seeded more densely than for harvest as a vegetable crop, these deep-rooted crops offer plenty of nutritious

leaves for composting, says Sarrantonio. After the tops of the brassicas are harvested for compost, the large taproots die back, leaving wonderful nutrient-rich channels in the soil. These open spaces allow microbial populations to flourish, enhance good

drainage, and create a nice structure in the soil.

Seeds of cold-tolerant forage kales are often sold in bulk quantities by farm-supply stores, but home gardeners can get the same results from familiar culinary varieties such as 'Dwarf Siberian' and 'Blue Curled Scotch'.

Some compost crops feed both the gardener and the compost pile. Most legumes that are cultivated for their edible beans don't retain much nitrogen in their leaves and stems after the seeds have fully matured—they have concentrated most of the nitrogen in their seeds. But cowpeas, a subtropical legume species that includes black-eyed peas and red

cowpeas, are mostly indeterminate; the plants will flower continuously and leaves will stay green until killed by frost in northern climates. Rather than tilling the plants into the soil in place, the tops can be removed and added to the compost pile, Sarrantonio says. The seeds of another legume, the soybean, can be harvested while green for edamame, while its foliage is still green and full

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nd more issues at

of nitrogen. Throw the soybean plants on the compost pile after harvest.

Comfrey and borage are both dynamic accumulaBorage is a selfseeding annual herb. Its roots are adept at withdrawing mineral nutrients from deep in the ground.

tors of nutrients-they have a reputation for accumulating phosphorus and zinc, in particular, says Sarrantonio-and both produce a tremendous amount of aboveground biomass. They grow so fast and so large that you can use them for many purposes, and certainly as a source of compost-pile ingredients.

When planning your garden this spring, make room for plants with a double benefit—a hardworking root system or edible seeds in addition to plentiful, carbon- or nitrogen-rich foliage to feed your compost pile. —Beth Hanson

For more information, see Find It Here, p. 101.







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Bindweed spreads easily by selfseeding and through a creeping root system that is almost impossible to eliminate by hand weeding.

Bio-Battling Bindweed

Q. Bindweed has overtaken my back yard. I have heard that bindweed mites are being used to control this troublesome plant but also that the mites may move from feeding on bindweed to attacking other landscape plants-roses, hydrangeas, etc. What are my options for getting rid of this noxious weed without using toxic herbicides?

> Corinne Gibson Colorado Springs, Colorado

A. With roots that can extend more than 20 feet below the soil and seeds that remain viable for as long as 50 years, field bindweed (Convolvulus arvensis) is a formidable foe in agricultural lands and home landscapes. Fortunately, bio-control programs in Colorado, Texas, and other western states have identified a natural enemy of this invasive plant pest, the bindweed gall mite (Aceria malherbae). Imported from southern Europe, this microscopic mite feeds only on bindweed and closely related wild morning glories, and has

proven highly effective at controlling bindweed without the use of herbicides.

"I believe we will always have some bindweed," says agricultural program specialist Terri Locke, of the Colorado Department of Agriculture Insectary. "But we will always have some mites to keep it in check. We have been working with this project for about 14 years and have found it to be very, very successful."

While bindweed mites seem to be most effective on dry soils, Locke says she has seen the bio-control do wonders in

irrigated fields and lawns. "Our lawn used to be infested with bindweed, and now it is bindweedfree. I have worked with skeptics of bio-control in general, and they have come around to accepting the mites as a good control. I have multiple sites where the mites took so well that the bindweed is gone." "The mite is

very slow-moving," explains Jerry Michels, Ph.D., a professor of entomology at the Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center, Amarillo, Texas A&M University System. "It works best on bindweed infestations that can be mowed 7 to 10 days after the mites are released and then every so often after that. This scatters the mites on clippings. Left to themselves, they move at a rate of about a meter or so per year. With mowing, they can spread several hundred meters in a few days." Because the mites spread so slowly and are so closely linked to field bindweed, they pose very little risk to other plants in the landscape, even those that are closely related to bindweed.

"From the results of the work we've done," adds Michels, "the bindweed mite is specific to bindweed for reproduction and development. It can survive on a number of Calystegia [false bindweed] species for a short time, but it does not reproduce or, if it does, it causes minimal damage. There



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ASK ORGANIC GARDENING

has been no evidence at all that they damage Ipomoea species [ornamental morning glories and sweet potatoes]."

Programs to distribute bindweed mites to residents are up and running in a number of states. Check with your state's department of agriculture or Cooperative Extension service for availability. Establishing the mites in bindweed-infested areas involves putting bindweed that is infested with mites in direct contact with uninfested plants and

letting nature take its course. Some patience is needed, too, Locke says. "Bindweed will not disappear from yards overnight. We are hoping to diminish its numbers so it isn't such a pest for gardeners and farmers. It's a balance of nature that we're striving for."

Locke adds that a moth (*Tyta luctuosa*) whose larvae feed on bindweed has now been established in Colorado and Oregon and is also being used to successfully control the noxious weed.







too wet

too dry

good to dig

Judging Soil Readiness

Q. Some seed packets say to plant "as soon as the soil can be worked" in the spring. How can I tell when that is? What happens if I start too soon?

Cal Matthews Dayton, Ohio

A. Besides the danger that some seeds planted in cold soil will rot rather than grow, starting "too soon" actually poses a greater risk to the soil in your garden than to any seeds you plant early in the spring. Digging, tilling, and walking on soil that is still wet from melted snow or spring rains can damage its structure in ways that will haunt your efforts for the rest of the growing season.

Working wet soil destroys the pore spaces between soil particles that allow air and water to move through the soil. Large, compacted clumps of wet soil become impermeable, concretelike clods that resist penetration by roots and moisture. Instead of soaking in, water runs off or sits on the surface of compacted soil, while a lack of air spaces limits root growth.

Take a hands-on approach to judging whether garden soil is too wet, too dry, or just right for digging: Pick up a handful of soil and squeeze it gently into a ball. Then apply light pressure to the ball with a finger from your other hand. If the ball breaks apart easily into loose pieces, the soil is dry enough to dig. If pressing on it flattens the ball or breaks it into large chunks, the soil is too wet—wait a few days and test it again.

Soil that won't hold together when you squeeze a handful is too dry. Working dry soil also damages the structure by reducing it to dust. If your soil is too dry to form even a loose ball, set a sprinkler to soak it deeply and thoroughly. Then wait a couple of days and test to see if it has dried enough to be safe to work.

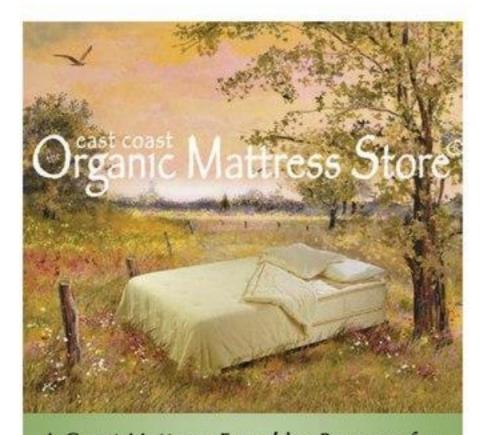


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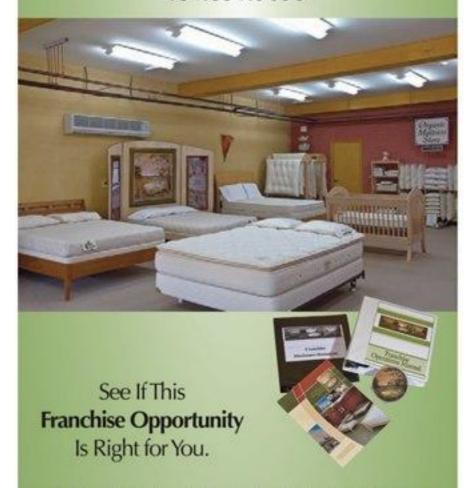
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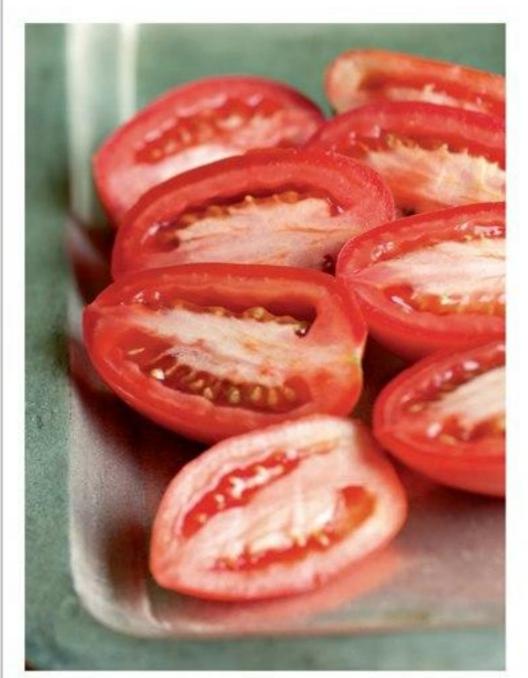
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ASK ORGANIC GARDENING



Too Cool for Tomatoes

Q. I planted my tomatoes in a new bed last year, and although I got a good crop, they were not sweet at all (except for the 'Sun Gold' fruits). I have planted these heirloom varieties before with good results. Was it the steer manure and compost I added to my clay soil or the cool summer we had this past year?

Cynthia Vena
Portland, Oregon

A. While fertility plays a role in tomato success or failure, the fact that your plants yielded well points to weather as the culprit. Sunshine and warmth both are critical to sugar development in tomatoes. Excessive soil moisture also limits tomatoes' sweetness—watering deeply once or twice a week is preferable to frequent, shallow watering.

"It was so cool and cloudy last summer," says Leslie Pohl, former director of Portland Community Gardens. "The ground didn't warm. Even container tomatoes did poorly."

"The Portland area can have spotty weather for tomato ripening, and early varieties are generally recommended," says Weston Miller of the Community and Urban Horticulture Faculty at Oregon State University in Corvallis. "'Early Girl', 'Stupice', 'Siletz', and 'Oregon Spring' are among my favorites. Midseason-ripening tomatoes such

as 'Willamette', as well as cherry tomatoes, are also good choices."

"Be patient and hold off planting until soil temperatures warm up—usually after Memorial Day," he says. Plastic mulches to warm the soil can also help provide more favorable conditions for tomatoes. For later varieties (including most heirlooms), a coldframe or greenhouse can improve the chances for a successful harvest.

Toxic Plants in Compost?

Q. Is it safe to use toxic plants in compost or mulch? I have a lot of pokeweed, and I understand only the young leaves are safe to eat, so I had been putting the mature leaves and stems in my compost pile. Then I heard that rhubarb leaves should be added only to a very hot compost pile. I don't want to make poisonous compost, but I hate to waste all this green matter!

A. Morrow Via email

A. Unless you plan to eat your compost—which we do not recommend!—there is no harm in putting leaves and stems of plants such as pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) or rhubarb (*Rheum rhabarbarum*) in your compost pile—whether it's hot or not. The compounds that make some plants unsafe for human consumption are not a concern in the biology of a compost pile, and they are unlikely to have an effect on the quality of the finished compost or on plants or soil to which the compost is applied.

A far greater concern of putting pokeweed in your compost is the risk of spreading that vigorous weed throughout your garden by way of seeds or pieces of roots that readily grow into new poke plants whenever conditions suit them. Even a hot (160°F) compost pile may not guarantee the roots' demise. Let the plants dry out in the sun for several days—until the fleshy roots are dry and shriveled—before adding them to the compost pile.

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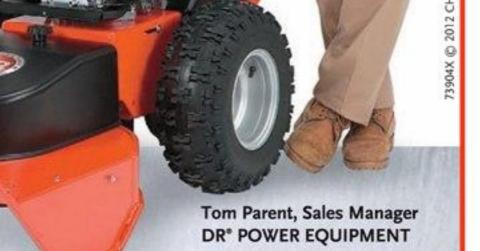
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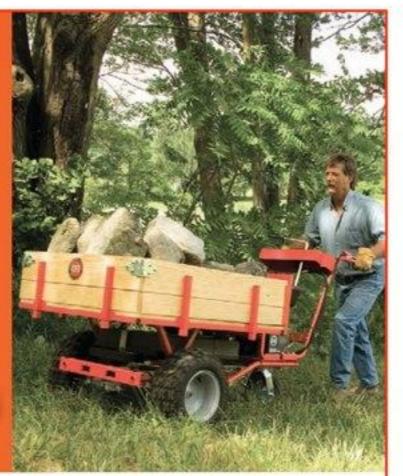
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GOOD BUG, BAD BUG

Beetlemania

Many species in the order Coleoptera

f Earth's 350,000-plus species of beetles, many serve as the planet's cleanup crew by getting rid of waste matter and decaying wood. Others operate as ever-important pollinators. Some beetles are plant-eating pests and still others are carnivores—predators that feast on other members of the insect clan. Beetles also serve as prey, being readily consumed by everything from birds to snakes. Their sheer numbers, not to mention their myriad roles in nature's food web, make them important insects.

Beetles and weevils are in the insect order *Coleoptera*, meaning "sheath wing"—an appropriate name due to their thick exoskeleton and hardened, protective forewings. Those that are destructive in gardens tend to be the herbivorous, or plant-eating, species. Pest beetles can be controlled by covering susceptible crops with protective row covers, hand-picking both adults and larvae, timing crops to avoid peak insect activity, and, when necessary, applying spinosad-based organic pesticides according to label instructions.

Learning to recognize pest beetle species as adults, and sometimes larvae, encourages both the use of appropriate control measures and an appreciation of their intrinsic, yet occasionally detrimental, significance to the landscape. Here are some of the beetles you're apt to come across in your garden. —Jessica Walliser





Blister Beetles

North America hosts some 300 species of blister beetles, but only a handful are harmful to gardens. These beetles acquired their common name because of their ability to produce a defensive compound that can cause human skin to blister when exposed (largely through accidental crushing). Blister beetles can poison cattle and horses if infested alfalfa or hay is ingested. Adult beetles are ¾- to 1-inch, elongated insects that consume a range of plants, including legumes, Japanese anemones, potatoes, phlox, zinnias, and many other garden vegetables and ornamentals.

Cucumber Beetles

Both common species of cucumber beetle, striped and spotted, measure ½ inch long. Adults are yellowish green. Striped species have three broad black stripes on the wing covers, while spotted species have either 11 or 12 black spots. Cucumber beetles damage members of the cucurbit family, including cucumbers, melons, pumpkins, and squash, as well as other vegetable crops. They chew ragged holes in flowers and foliage and spread diseases, including bacterial wilt and cucumber mosaic virus. Their larvae reside below ground, where they feed on plant roots until pupation occurs.



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1 small red bell pepper, thinly sliced

1/2 cup thinly sliced scallions

1/2 cup chopped peanuts, divided

1/4 cup chopped cilantro

1/3 cup soy sauce

1 tsp sesame oil

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2 Tbsp peanut butter

1 Tbsp grated ginger

2 Tbsp rice wine vinegar

2 Tbsp honey

2 cloves garlic, minced

1-2 tsp red pepper flakes (or to taste) Cilantro sprigs, for garnish

Prepare noodles as directed on package. Drain well, and place in a large bowl. Add broccoli, bell pepper, scallions, half the peanuts, and the chopped cilantro.

In a small bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, sesame oil, fish oil, peanut butter, ginger, vinegar, honey, garlic, and red pepper flakes. Add to noodle mixture and toss thoroughly to coat. Garnish with remaining chopped peanuts and cilantro sprigs. Tastes great served warm or cold.

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GOOD BUG, BAD BUG

Colorado Potato Beetle

Both the tan-andblack-striped adult beetles and their black-spotted, fat red larvae feed on the foliage of



potatoes, tomatoes, eggplants, and other vegetables. Severe infestations can be devastating, as the beetles can quickly defoliate entire plants. The larvae are often found feeding in groups before they drop to the ground to pupate. They can go from egg to adult in 21 days.

Asparagus Beetle

Though this beetle has but one host, asparagus, its damage is extensive. Adults chew ragged depressions in

developing spears, while the armygreen larvae chew foliage, limiting photosynthesis and decreasing yields. Adults are 1/4 inch long. They are black with



several cream-colored spots and red wing borders. Their black, elongated eggs are often found attached to spear tips.

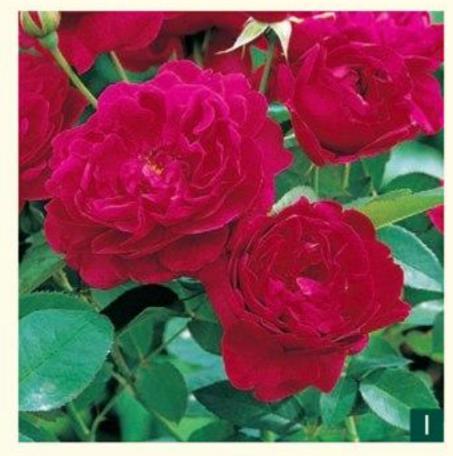
Black Vine Weevil

Adult weevils are black and ½ inch long with a short, broad snout. Black vine weevils, like aphids, are parthenogenetic, meaning females can lay viable eggs

without the help of males. This pest feeds on some 100 species of plants, including many broad-leaved evergreens and perennials. The nocturnal feeding of adult

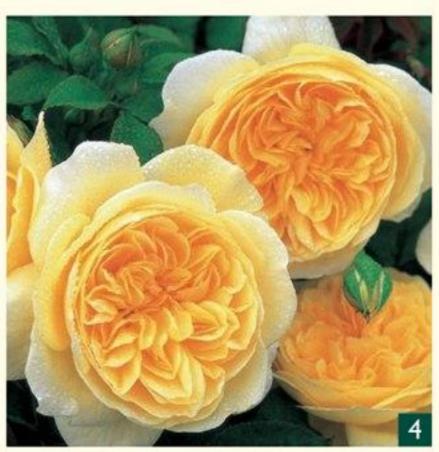


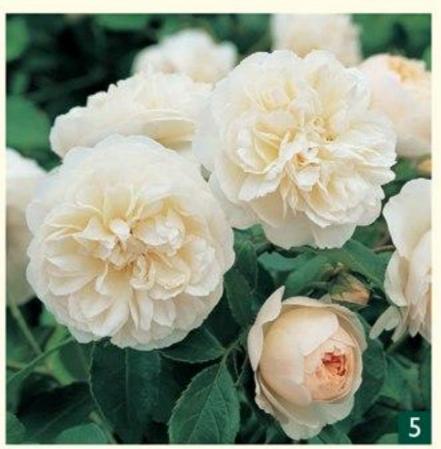
weevils produces distinctive crescentshaped notches in the leaf margins. The ground-dwelling larvae cause significant damage to plant roots in spring and early summer. The adult beetles do not fly, as their wing covers are fused.















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TOTAL

South Florida gears up to eradicate a slimy invader.

n the 1950s, Hollywood deployed outsized versions of the familiar critters that flit and scuttle through the garden (think: The Fly, The Spider, and The Deadly Mantis) to terrorize science-fiction audiences. In September 2011, the Florida Department of Agriculture confirmed a true-life version of those creepy flicks in Miami-Dade County: an outbreak of the giant African land snail (GALS), a native of Kenya and Tanzania. Within 3 months, officials had collected more than 33,000 of the massive mollusks, whose bodies measure up to 8 inches and whose shells can grow larger than a child's fist. "They'd probably been around a couple of years," says spokesperson Denise Feiber. "We didn't find them the day they showed up."

With a diet that comprises more than 500 plant species, GALS (Achatina fulica) boast a prodigious appetite that puts both backyard landscaping and commercial agriculture at risk as populations rise. As with other snails, they favor seedlings, but they're not picky eaters. "In other countries where they've become established, they move through like an army," says Feiber, noting that without natural enemies they become a challenge to control once established. "They just eat every plant in sight." The snails' taste for calcium-rich foods-including concrete and stucco-to sustain growth of their conical, yellow-streaked, reddish-brown shells also puts buildings at risk.

In addition, GALS can be a menace on the road (hit one and the resulting slick can send a vehicle careening) and a health hazard in the kitchen (rat lungworm, a parasite that contaminates snail-slicked veggies and undercooked snail meat, causes a lowgrade but still unpleasant version of human meningitis).

Left to their own devices, mature GALS can slink a distance of just 250 meters in a year, but their pea-sized eggs travel fast on contaminated plant material moved by unsuspecting humans. Live adults are transported (illegally, in the United States) for food, as pets, and for rites associated with African and Afro-Brazilian religious practices. The snails tolerate temperatures



as low as 36°F, and although they can go dormant in suboptimal conditions, freezing temperatures kill them. Thus it is unlikely that they could become established in the continental United States north of USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 10.

The Global Invasive Species Database rates GALS "one of the worst snail pests of tropic and subtropic regions." Its reproductive potential is impressive: After mating just once, the hermaphroditic adults can store enough sperm to lay some 1,200 fertilized eggs over the course of a lifespan that can last nearly a decade.

In 1966, a woman released her grandson's three pet GALStransported from Hawaii, where they've been established since the late 1930s-in her Miami garden. Officials captured more than 17,000 of their progeny over the next decade before declaring a \$1 million eradication program a success. Midway through the program, the USDA had estimated that if the snails became established, annual costs associated with crop losses and agricultural control efforts would reach \$11 million.

This time around, the state's department of agriculture has partnered with federal officials on a comprehensive effort that includes hand collection, community outreach and education, and use of an iron phosphate bait. "We don't assume it will be eradicated in 1 year," says Feiber. "We have to take it a step at a time, but we are optimistic." - Sharon Tregaskis

For more information, see Find It Here on page 101.



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Red-Tailed Hawk

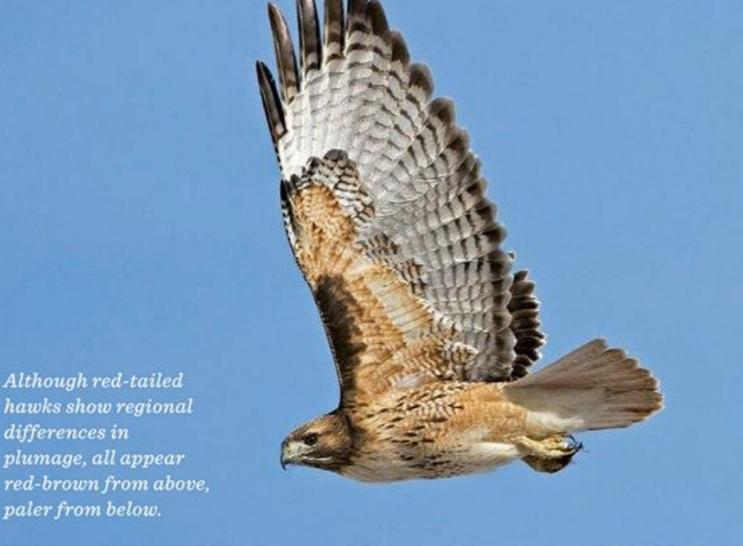
Perhaps the world's most famous red-tailed hawk is Pale Male, which has nested on the exterior of 927 Fifth Avenue in New York City since 1991. Other members of this species, Buteo jamaicensis, are common throughout North America, especially in rural settings. Keep an eye on telephone poles or fence posts along highways, where the 2-foot-tall birds often perch while scanning for prey. The red-tail's broad, rounded wings and short tail are dark red-brown from above and pale from below, making this hawk easy to identify in the air. While its flight may seem labored, with heavy strokes of the wings, its ability to soar can be awe-inspiring.

Thanks to the red-tail's popularity with Hollywood sound engineers who use its shrill cry to stand in for myriad raptors, including bald eagles, moviegoers throughout the world know its voice. For a glimpse of the species' aerial courtship display, look skyward from late winter through early spring.

The pair soars in wide circles high above the earth,

interrupted by the male's steep dives toward ground and equally sharp climbs, inscribing a V with his flight path. Pairs often mate for life and together build a nest, incubate the young, and then teach their offspring to hunt.

Beyond its sheer beauty, the red-tail's voracious diet of small rodents, rabbits, and even insects makes it popular with market gardeners and farmers. It's less common in smaller gardens, where the hawk's 4-foot wingspan hinders its ability to maneuver. While its keen eyesight enables it to hunt on the wing at altitudes of up to 200 feet, the red-tail is even more likely to scan for snacks from dead tree limbs and other perches that afford a broad view. —Sharon Tregaskis



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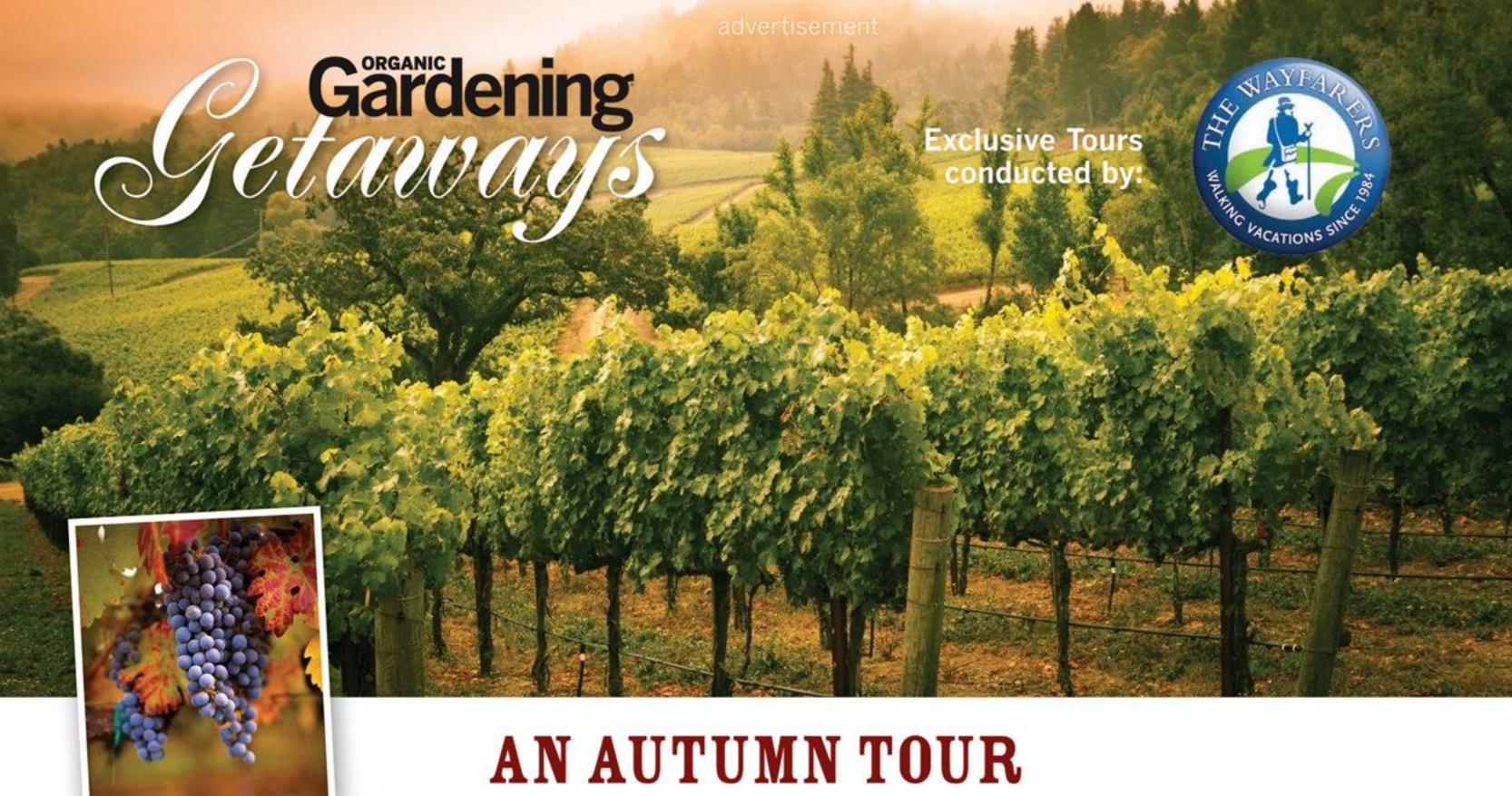


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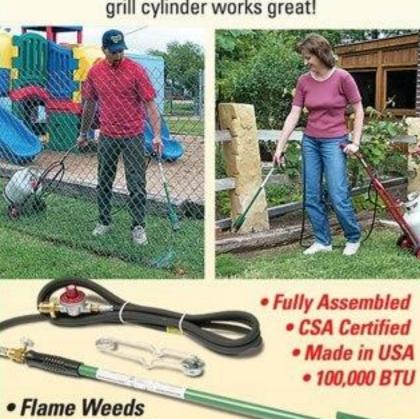








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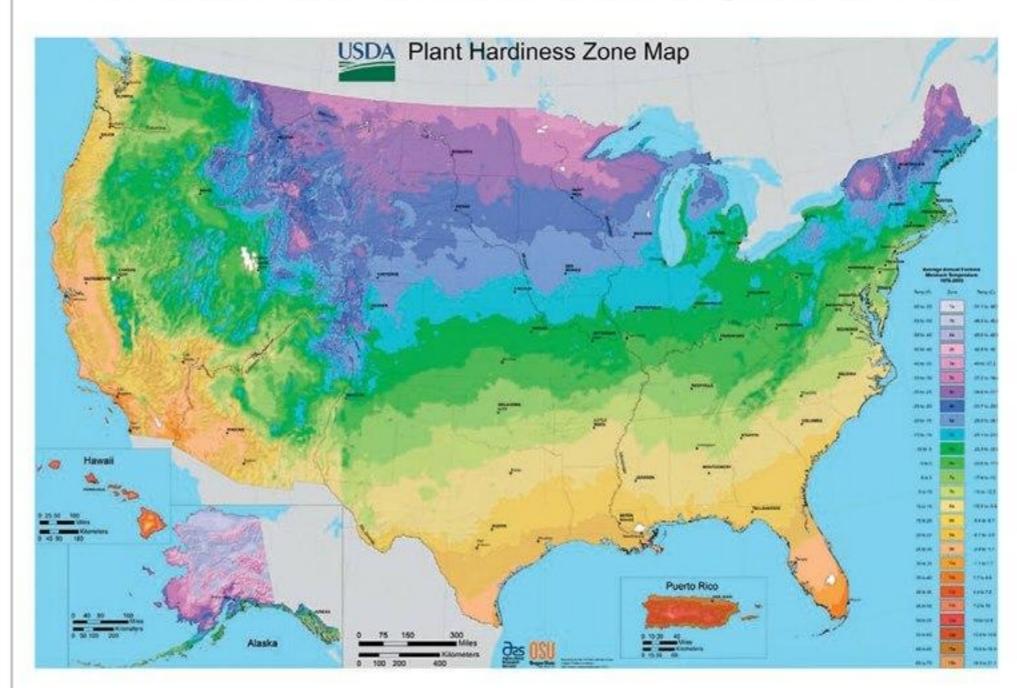
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EARTH MATTERS

Zonal Migration

The USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map gets a tune-up.



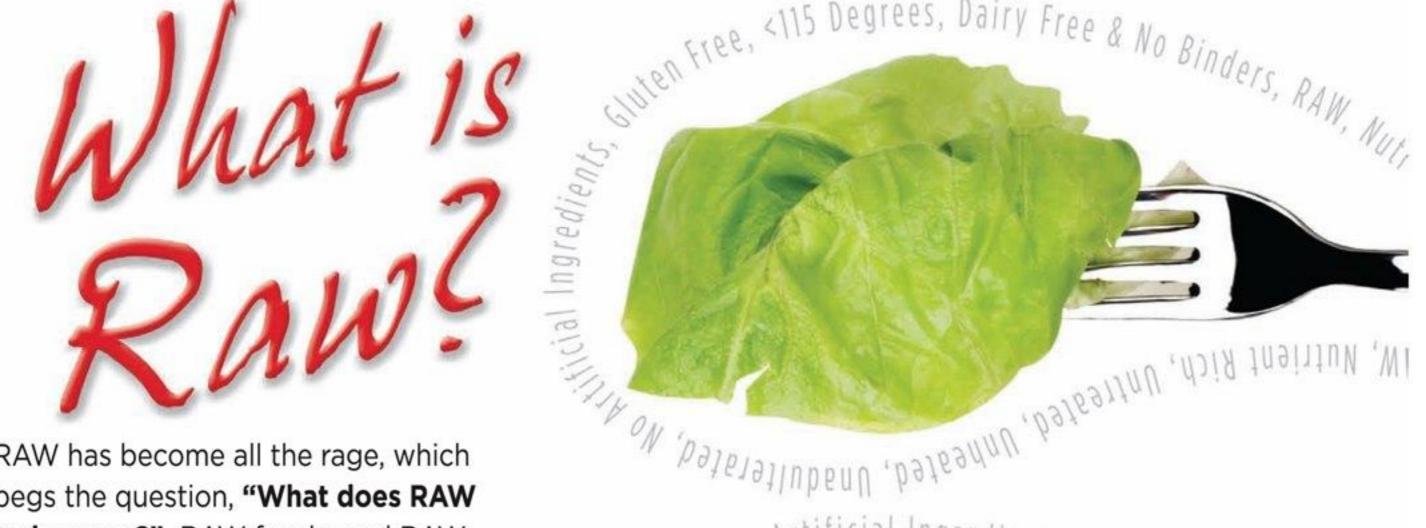
n January 25, the USDA sent gardeners rushing to computers when it released a new Plant Hardiness Zone Map, the first since 1990. Many found that their zones had changed, and were surprised to see two new zones, 12 and 13.

Kim Kaplan, a spokesperson for the USDA's Agricultural Research Service, has been working on the map since 2006. She says that the 1990 map used only 13 years of data; the 2012 version uses 30 years of data from more than 8,000 locations. The USDA's partner, the PRISM climate group from Oregon State University, fed the data into an algorithm that included slope, elevation changes, and prevailing winds to interpolate between data-collecting points. Then, Kaplan says, "we ground-truthed it. We sent it out to a lot of experts in various fields and said, 'does this look right to you?' " A few gaps or biases in the data were discovered, which led to further refinements.

While many locations on the map are a half-zone warmer, is this evidence of climate change? Not necessarily, says Kaplan. Many places moved up in zone, but it was sometimes due to shifts as little as a few tenths of a degree. The two new zones were created so tropical plants could be described in the same vocabulary as plants in other climates. The data is also more accurate than the old map, so "comparing the 1990 and the 2012 maps is apples and oranges," says Kaplan. "You can't ascribe one particular zone change to any one category of methodology change." And, of course, the map measures only average low temperatures, not highs.

The new online map (available at plant hardiness.ars.usda.gov) is a virtual treasure trove for gardeners. The interactive feature allows for zooming down to ZIP code or even street level; offers satellite, terrain, and street views; and can shift in transparency for clearer viewing. It is also available for download so gardeners can print maps.

Being in a new zone doesn't necessarily mean you're in new gardening territory. As Kaplan says, "Nothing supplants a gardener's knowledge. What works in your garden today will work in your garden tomorrow." —Katie Walker



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Garden of Life





Wheelbarrows and Carts

n most of the country, now is garden prep time, when tons of soil, compost, and other amendments are incorporated into beds and borders. Getting the garden ready for planting is some of the most physically demanding work of the gardening year, and without the proper tools, it can take a real toll on the body. That is why every gardener needs a good garden cart or wheelbarrow. Count on one of these to keep you moving all the way to fall cleanup. —Katie Walker

1. Children's

The Seymour children's wheelbarrow allows young gardeners to get their hands dirty and help out. The poly tray is corrosion-proof, and the solid rubber wheel lets them steer it through any terrain. Adults gardening in tight spaces will also find the compact size useful. §37 from Hayneedle

2. Collapsible

Big garden but no storage space? The Collapsible Yard Cart is the perfect solution. When closed, it leans in a corner, out of the way. When opened, it has a 150-pound load capacity and lies flat on the ground for easy loading. For community gardeners, it fits easily into a car trunk or backseat. \$70 from Clean Air Gardening

3. Sturdy

A garden cart/wheelbarrow hybrid, the Ames Total Control garden cart has two 18-inch wheels for stability, combined with the lightweight maneuverability of a wheelbarrow. The poly tray is 5 cubic feet, and the newly designed grip allows for easy dumping and steady handling. \$90 from Ames True Temper

4. High-Capacity

For those in need of a heavy-duty hauler, the Lee Valley garden wagon with side racks is the workhorse of garden carts, but with classic styling to make it easy on the eyes. It can cart ½ ton of weight on its four 3½-inch-wide wheels. The 2-by-4-foot base is steel mesh, and the entire cart is hand-made. \$230 from Lee Valley

Online exclusive: To see a recycled wheelbarrow with a 550pound load capacity, perfect for the eco-conscious consumer with a lot to haul, go to OrganicGardening.com/wheelbarrows.

For more information, see Find It Here on page 101.



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Clockwise from top left: A branding iron at Texas Ranch Life. • Field of bluebonnets. • Riding the range at TRL. • The Antique Rose Emporium.

Bluebonnet Country

n spring, rural Washington County, Texas, and its environs float on a sea of bluebonnets. Families from Austin, Houston, and beyond flock to its waves of azure flowers, often as a backdrop for family portraits. Every March, parades and celebrations commemorate the fact that the _ county was the birthplace of Texas independence in 1836.

Farmers Jenny and Brad Stufflebeam espouse "righteous food" on their 22-acre Home Sweet Farm near Brenham, growing heirloom vegetables and herbs. Farm tours, workshops, and a popular Community-Supported Agriculture program are only some of the ways the young couple brings the organic message to this part of Texas.

With a downtown on the National Register of Historic Places, Brenham has never lost that small-town-America feel. Its main street welcomes strolling, shopping, and visiting.

An homage to music through wood, the jewel in the Round Top Festival Institute's crown is its concert hall, hand-built by craftsmen to be not



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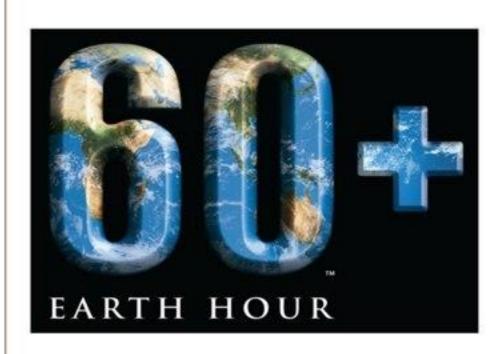


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GREEN GETAWAYS

only visually jaw-dropping but also acoustically sublime. The classical music festival in June and July is the Institute's raison d'être, though the 210-acre campus now hosts events most of the year. Outdoors, the organic MacAshen Gardens are reason alone to visit, with acres of rare and unusual plants flourishing amid "ruins" of Texas limestone.

You'd expect J.R. Ewing to be standing on the porch of Lillian Farms. He wouldn't find the place lacking, and you won't either. Run by the gracious Barbara Segal, this light-filled bed-and-breakfast is cozy yet luxurious—beds so lofty, they have their own stairs—and the hospitality is as big as the Lone Star state itself. For guests who never travel without their horses, there's a stable for them to enjoy the good life, as well.

There's a rumor that Royers Round Top
Cafe offers fare besides pie, but diners are
forgiven for not seeing past the butterscotch
chip, pecan, and coconut chess treats that
make Royers famous. Bud "The Pieman"
Royer and his family serve up Texas-style contemporary comfort food with good-natured
attitude. Oh, and when dessert comes,
"Remember the Alamode." Bud charges extra
for pie without ice cream.

A visit to the famed Antique Rose Emporium in Independence is on any respectable rose fanatic's bucket list. Hundreds of heir-loom roses "rustled" from oblivion grow on the grounds and are available at the nursery. Besides the acres of roses and perennials, the gardens are peppered with wry vignettes; don't forget to pay your respects at the cemetery of cracked pots.

If Provence isn't in the budget, a day wandering **Lavande**'s purple hills harvesting your own lavender is a mighty nice consolation prize. This lavender and olive farm makes its own sachets and bath products, too.

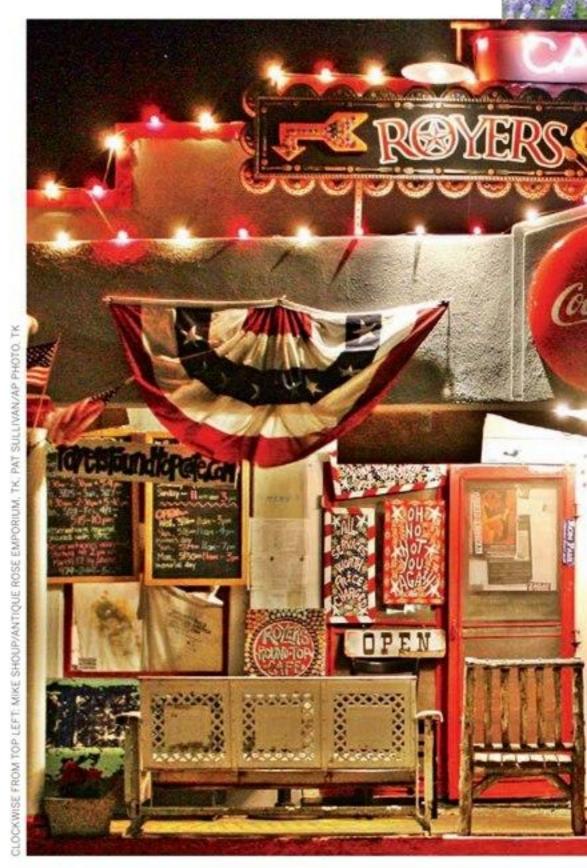
Give your inner cowboy free rein at **Texas Ranch Life**, a working cattle ranch that offers horseback riding, roping, and cattle drives of those famous Texas longhorns.

Spend the night in one of the restored historic buildings, eat cowboy grub, and marvel at how beautiful 1,800 secluded acres can be.

—Therese Ciesinski

For more information, see Find It Here, p. 101.





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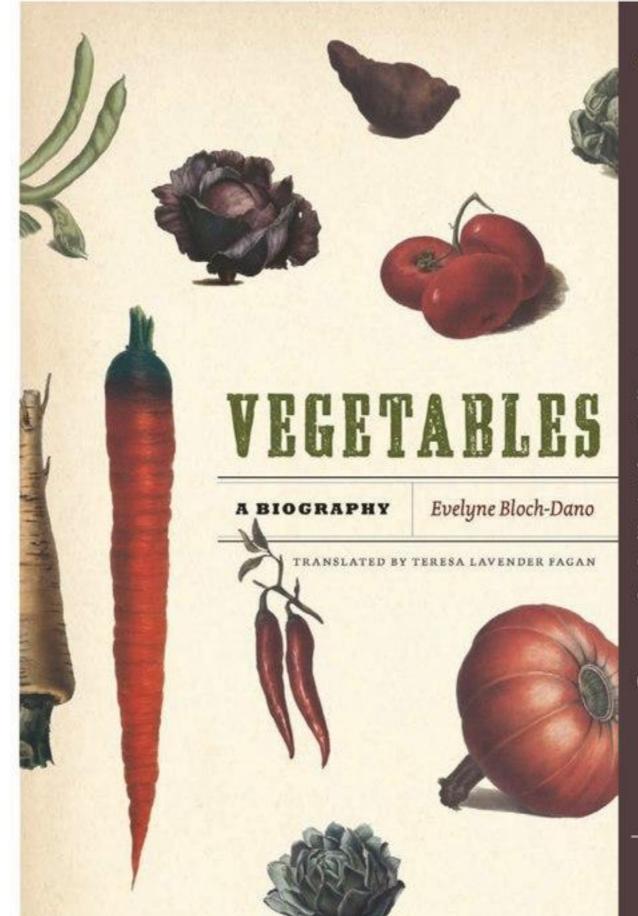


Clockwise from top left: Antique Rose Emporium.

- · Pecan pie.
- A Texas longhorn amid bluebonnets.
- Royers Round Top Cafe, where the "welcome" sign reads, "Oh No Not You Again."







VEGETABLES

A BIOGRAPHY

Evelyne E. Bloch-Dano

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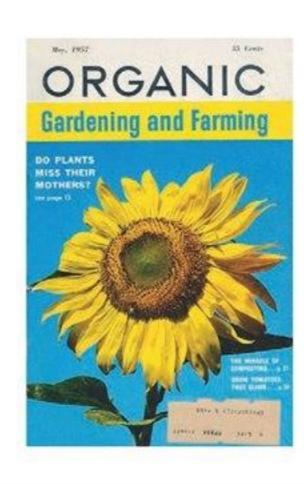
n 2012, Organic Gardening celebrates 70 years of giving readers the information and inspiration they need to live lightly from the ground up. Long before the idea of organic became mainstream, Organic Gardening has devoted our pages to educating people about living a healthy, sustainable life the organic way. We led the charge then and continue to do so today!

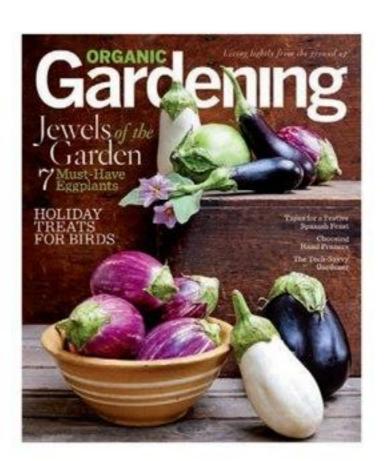
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Plant TNT: Heritage Irises, p. 22

Bluebird Haven Iris Garden, 530-620-5017, blue birdhavenirisgarden.com (no online ordering; mail only); Old House Gardens, 734-995-1486, oldhouse gardens.com; Wildwood Gardens, 503-829-3102, wildwoodgardens.net (no online ordering; mail only).

Skills & Abilities: Presprouting Peas, p. 30

Untreated pea seeds and bacterial inoculant for peas: Johnny's Selected Seeds, 877-564-6697, johnnyseeds.com; Territorial Seed Co., 800-626-0866, territorialseed.com.

Flower Power: The Best of Thymes, page 40

Red creeping thyme: **Greenwood Nursery and Gardens**, 800-426-0958, greenwoodnursery.com.
Common thyme: **Johnny's Selected Seeds**, 877-564-6697, johnnyseeds.com. Caraway thyme: **Mountain Valley Growers**, 559-338-2775, mountainvalley growers.com. Lemon thyme: **White Flower Farm**, 800-420-2852, whiteflowerfarm.com.

Back to Basics, p. 44

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Territorial Seed Co., 800-626-0866, territorialseed.

com; Tomato Growers Supply Co., 888-478-7333, tomatogrowers.com; Turtle Tree Biodynamic Seed Initiative, 518-329-3038, turtletreeseed.org.

Natural Companions, p. 56

Natural Companions: The Garden Lover's Guide to Plant Combinations, by Ken Druse, botanical scans by Ellen Hoverkamp, will be published by Stewart, Tabori & Chang in March 2012 and available in bookstores or online at kendruse.com.

Crunch Time, p. 62

Peanut seeds: W. Atlee Burpee & Co., 800-333-5808, burpee.com; Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, 540-894-9480, southernexposure.com.

Goat Cheese Guru, p. 68

Fromagerie Belle Chevre, 26910 Bethel Rd., Elkmont, AL 35620, 800-735-2238.

Pay Dirt: Growing for Compost, p. 74

Bountiful Gardens, 707-459-6410, bountifulgardens. org; Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply, 888-784-1722, groworganic.com; Sustainable Seed Co., 877-620-7333, sustainableseedco.com; Territorial Seed Co., 800-626-0866, territorialseed.com.

Earth Matters: Mollusks Take Miami, p. 88

If you think you've spotted a giant African land snail (GALS), call the Florida Department of Agriculture's dedicated hotline: 888-397-1517. For more information, visit freshfromflorida.com/pi/plantinsp/gals.html.

We Like This! Wheelbarrows and Carts, p. 94

Collapsible Yard Cart: Clean Air Gardening, 214-819-9500, cleanairgardening.com; Seymour Children's Wheelbarrow: Hayneedle, 888-880-4884, hayneedle. com; Ames Total Control: available at The Home Depot; Lee Valley Garden Wagon with sides: Lee Valley Tools, 800-267-8735, leevalley.com.

Green Getaways: Bluebonnet Country, p. 96

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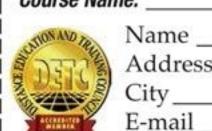
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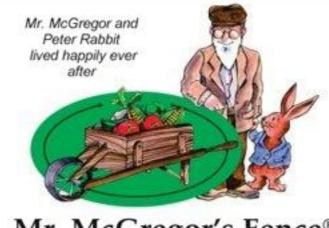
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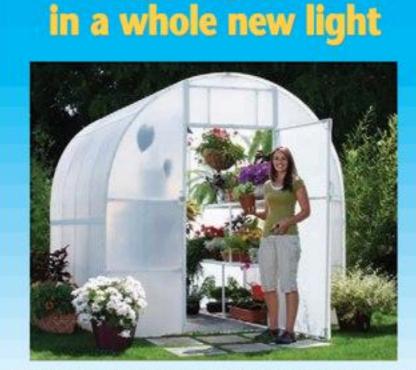
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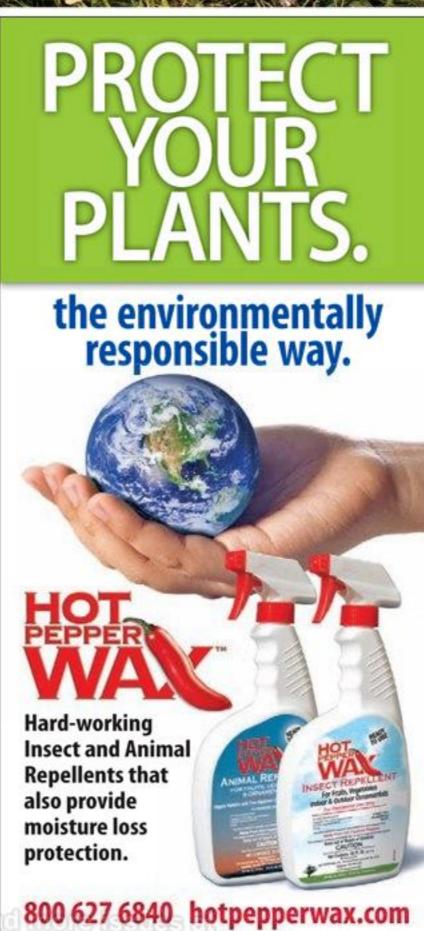
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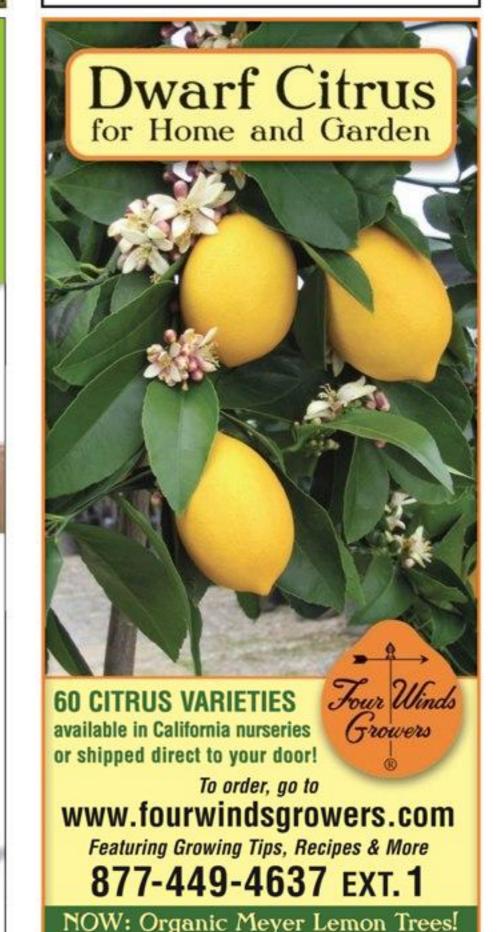
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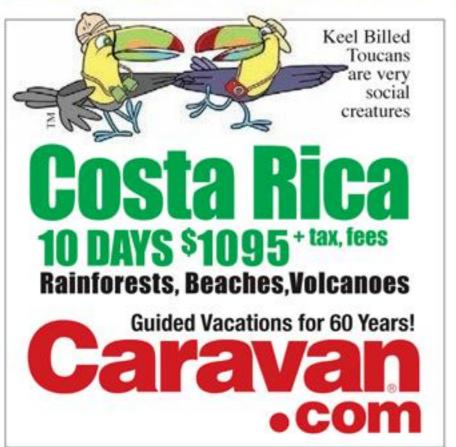


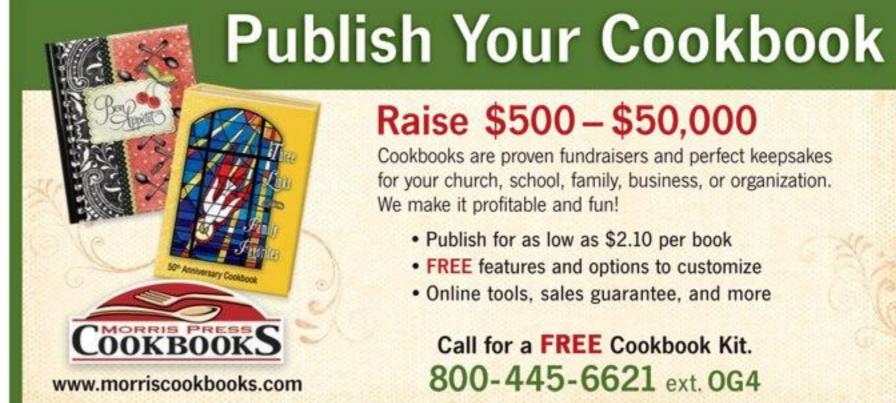




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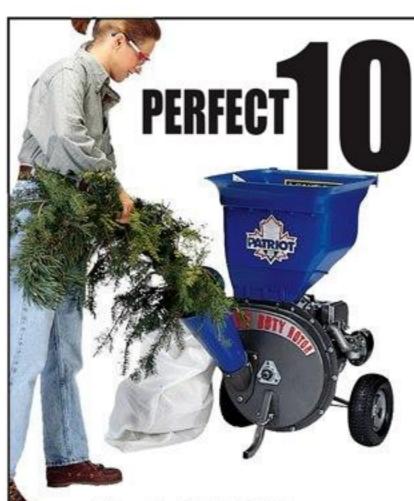
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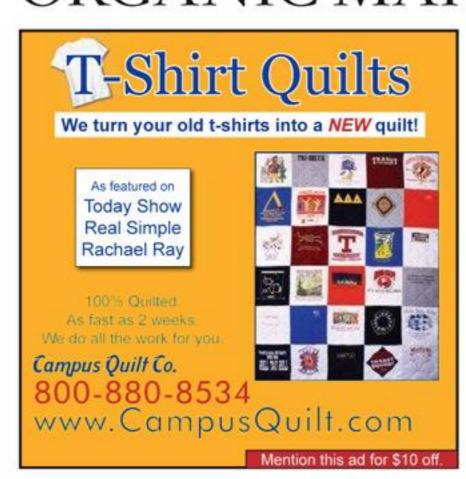
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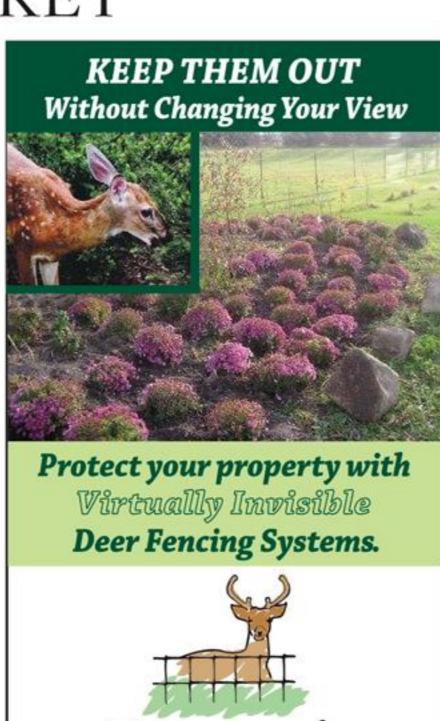
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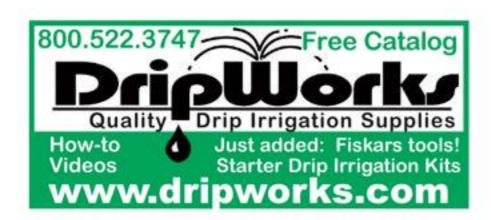
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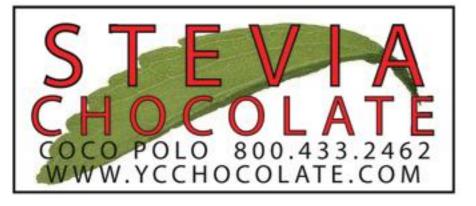


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Ten Things I Have to Plant Every Year

(no matter what)

pring is a time to start over and try new things, but after 30 years of gardening, there are the tried-and-true that simply must be planted every year—partly because I make dishes from them that last all year in my freezer, and partly because they are just so superior fresh to anything bought, even from my local farmer. This is my list.

1. Basil. Not the fancy kinds (although I do like to plant at least one purple basil because it's so good and pretty in salads). 'Genovese' basil. For pesto. For sauce. For salads. For whatever, whenever, pinched off right before dinner, if possible.

2. Tomatoes. Of course! No gardener worth his or her salt wouldn't plant them. Here I need an assortment. Paste tomatoes, heirloom yellow and green and of course some big fat red ones. Yum. I put them all in sauce.

3. Savoy cabbage. It's hard to find good organic savoy cabbage, so I grow a whole bunch of heads and then have cabbage blanching and freezing day because this is the key ingredient in "fooey," which is a Christmas dish from my father-in-law. Savoy cabbage blanched and sautéed with garlic, topped with fried anchovies and fried dried cayenne peppers. The recipe is on my blog, and it's so good you won't believe it. You must use savoy cabbage for this.

4. Cayenne peppers. For the fooey, of course, but also for putting on pasta and in soups. They are so easy to dry, and I need a good supply to last all winter. And the other thing I love about cayenne peppers is they never trick you into thinking they might be a sweet pepper... one look at them and you *know* they are hot.

5. Shelling peas. Grrr. This is my nemesis, since I adore them so much and find them so hard to grow well—either because my trellising stinks or the birds and bunnies eat them—and there are never enough, and the kids love them, too, and for me it's the whole reason to garden, and this year if it's the last thing I do I'm going to grow peas. Lots of them.

6. Green beans. Like peas, so superior to anything you can buy when you eat them fresh off the plant. Green beans, however, I find very easy to grow. So they are a reliable performer and they freeze well, too (when blanched).

7. Sweet peppers. Here I like green and red ones that really look like sweet peppers so you don't get fooled into eating a hot pepper by accident (which I don't mind but the kids do). I like them fresh, roasted, raw, or cooked (with sausage!).

8. Parsley. Flatleaf Italian . . . for the roasted peppers, for salad, for anything. In the summer, I love to make a mixture of fresh chopped herbs, salt, olive oil, and a bit of fresh chopped garlic to put on top of fish, chicken, or steak. It's so simple and so deeply satisfying.

9. Garlic. Speaking of garlic, my husband plants this, but it's just so useful, and we never run out, and as long as you can remember to plant it in the fall, it's the easiest thing you will ever grow.

10. Wild card. Every year there is something I simply must plant but is not on the annual list—it's included because of my mood or a meal I ate at a restaurant. Some years, it's potatoes. Some years, it's those flat Romano pole beans. It would be beets if anyone else ate them other than me! What will it be this year? I'm thinking it's a pole-bean year. But I might change my mind. And that's one of the best things about gardening: For the price of a pack of seeds, I can do whatever I want in my little plot-o-land. And then I can eat it! —Maria Rodale



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